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THOMAS
A KEMPIS
IMITATION
OF
CHRIST

ROBERT G. ROCKET



THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

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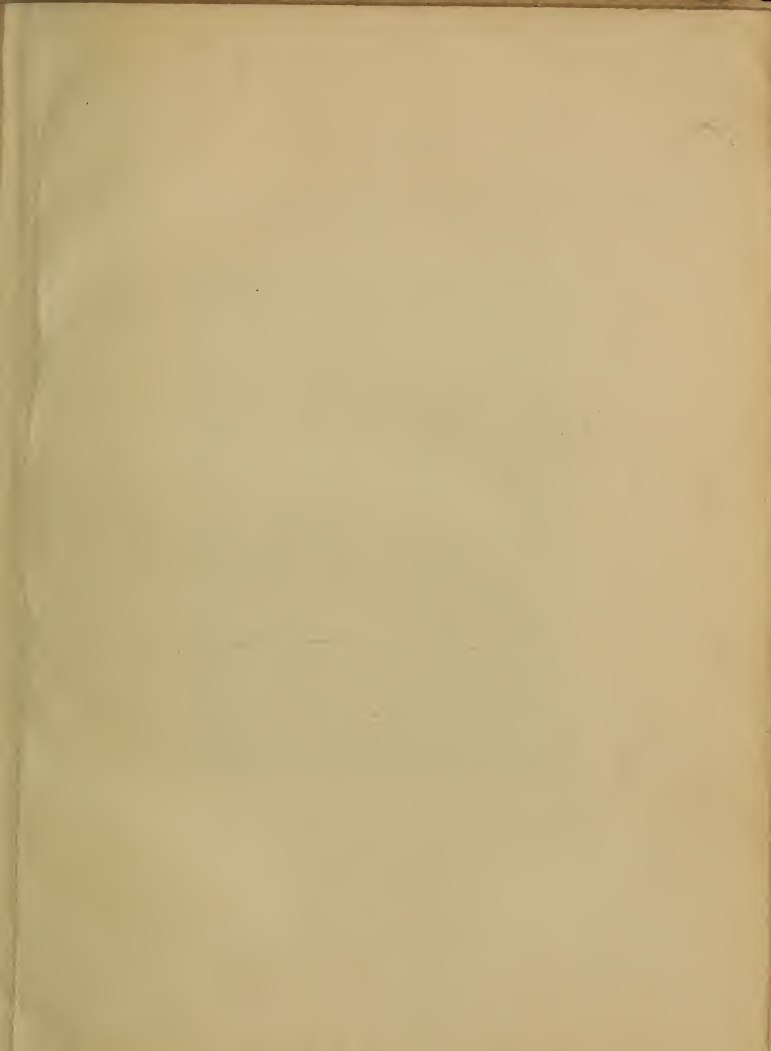
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THOMAS A KEMPIS

Imitation Christi

THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST

BY
THOMAS A KEMPIS

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
BROTHER LEO, F.S.C.

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ST. MARY'S COLLEGE
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

THIS edition of "The Imitation of Christ" has been prepared from an educational rather than a devotional viewpoint. The text is the result of research, analysis, comparison, and reflection, and has been adapted with a view to its use in high school and academic classes. The aim of the editor has been to suggest an archaic flavor in the style, without, at the same time, making too great a demand on the reading vocabulary of the students.

No apology is deemed necessary for the order in which the books of "The Imitation" are presented in this edition. When the work is considered as a literary masterpiece having unity and orderly development, the book dealing with the Sacrament of the Altar finds its only logical place as Book Third; and the Fourth Book, on Interior Consolation, is the most fitting conclusion of the treatise. Furthermore, the order of books here observed is the order followed by Thomas à Kempis

himself in his autograph manuscript of 1441. Two of the most learned Kempists of our own times, Dr. Michael Joseph Pohl and Sir Francis Cruise, M.D., arrange the books in the order given here.

The notes are intended to be suggestive, not exhaustive, and presuppose the existence — and frequent use — of the dictionary.

The editor feels it incumbent on him to express his indebtedness to the writings of a large number of Kempist scholars, most of whom are mentioned in the bibliography, and to the valued criticism of his friend and colleague, Brother Fabrician.

L.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

June 1, 1910.

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INTRODUCTION

I. "THE IMITATION OF CHRIST" AS LITERATURE

THE modern conception of literature recognizes the essentially human qualities of the great books of the world. The popularity of the expression, "human interest," applied almost indiscriminately to books and paintings, to musical scores and historical events, is indicative of the present-day attitude toward the varied fruits of the human mind. Vanished now are the thumb-rule critics who measured Shakespeare and Dante by the precepts of rhetoric; gone, too, are the Johnsons and the Boileaus who laid out with exquisite care artificial gardens of criticism and in the midst thereof erected symmetrical but hopelessly inadequate pantheons for the literary immortals. In their stead we have men and women who are interested primarily, not in words as words nor in the formal application of more formal rules of rhetoric, but in that great, mysterious,

palpitating thing called life. More intimate knowledge of human nature is the object of our quest; and so long as a book deals with that subject in a fresh, an illuminating, and a masterly way, that book is assured of our attention. With Terence we declare that nothing that is human can be foreign to us: —

“Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto.”

It is this modern conception of literature that makes that fifteenth-century treatise called “The Imitation of Christ” an object of study from the literary as distinguished from the devotional point of view. The book is a human document. It is the story of a human soul in which is caught up the reflection of countless other souls with the same yearnings, the same strivings, the same doubts and uncertainties and torments of unrest. It is the voice of the race calling across the chasm of years, — the same voice that, in vastly different tones, we recognize in the odes of Anacreon and the essays of Lamb, in “Peer Gynt” and “The Ring and the Book.” It is, says Matthew Arnold, “the most exquisite document after those of the New Testament, of all the documents the Christian spirit has ever inspired.”

In "The Imitation of Christ" we discover an intimate knowledge of human nature. Its author shares the gift accorded to all great writers, the subtle and intangible facility for getting beneath the surface of life and grasping with the fingers of consciousness the traits which are found common to the Greek slave and the Spanish diplomat, the lowly monk and the sophisticated man of the world. It was the perception of this characteristic in the masterpiece of Thomas à Kempis that prompted St. John Baptist de la Salle, the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to make a daily reading in "The Imitation" a precept of their common rule. He rightly argued that the teacher must know human nature, and that from "The Imitation" a vital knowledge of human nature may be secured.

In every masterpiece of literature there is revealed a knowledge of human nature; but invariably there is something more. Knowledge alone does not suffice. The cynic who points out our weaknesses and our follies, and jeers at them and at us, undoubtedly possesses knowledge; but no cynic who was merely a cynic ever produced a book of abiding worth. Besides knowledge of men, the great writers invariably reveal

a profound sympathy for and with men. They recognize themselves as a part of the world they portray, as sharers in the common lot, as partakers of humanity's sorrows and humanity's joys. They look into their own hearts, and write.

This sympathy for man, this feeling of kinship with man, we find everywhere in "The Imitation of Christ." Its prevailing tone is that of trustful piety, of sane and mellow optimism. Sir Walter Raleigh, confined in the dismal Tower of London, leaped in spirit over the narrow bounds of time and place and wrote a history of the world; and Thomas à Kempis, a monk dwelling for a lifetime in the cloister of Mount St. Agnes, set down in his great book thoughts that find their counterpart reverberations in the minds of saints and sinners, peasants and savants. And the secret of his power was his sympathy for his fellow-men. "To have arrived at such a point," says Michelet, "it is needful to have loved much."

How is "The Imitation of Christ" to be studied?

Bearing in mind that here he has, not an English classic, but a world classic, the student will not linger long over the form and structure of the book. Originally the work was written in Latin, and, as those

who know assure us, not Ciceronian Latin. While no English edition can reproduce all the stylistic properties of the original, a translation can preserve, at least in some degree, the terse, rugged, epigrammatic style of "The Imitation of Christ." In his manner of presenting his thoughts, Thomas à Kempis reminds us of Emerson and Bishop Spalding.

Like Emerson, à Kempis wrote when the mood seized him, with little attempt to indite an essay structurally exact and coördinated in all its parts; but having collected those of his writings that were to constitute the treatise on the following of Christ, the author unquestionably arranged them according to a definite general plan. It is a singular fact, in this connection, that the order of the books as given in the authentic Kempist autograph manuscript at Brussels has been changed in almost every subsequent edition of the work. It is equally unfortunate that many editors have seen fit to omit one entire book, namely, the Third, which deals with the Holy Communion.

The student of "The Imitation" should readily perceive that there is method in the order of the books as arranged by Thomas à Kempis and preserved in the present edition of the work. The First Book dwells

on what is called by spiritual writers the Purgative Way, — that is, the initial stage of the journey toward perfection, the stage where the soul frees itself from the grosser sins and lays the foundation of necessary virtues. The Illuminative Way, in which the soul draws down the light of heaven by meditation on the virtues practised by Jesus Christ, is the topic of the Second Book, ending with that sublime prose poem, the chapter on the Royal Road of the Cross. The Third Book, devoted to the Holy Communion, the priestly state, and the dispositions of the person who would receive Christ sacramentally, is the keystone of the volume, and leads by a natural transition to the Fourth Book, which deals with the interior consolations of the Unitive Way, — that is, with the spiritual comforts afforded the soul that is in union with Jesus.

Passing from a study of the style and the structure of "The Imitation of Christ," the student should undertake to possess himself of its content — a process which is far more essential than any purely stylistic study could be to a right understanding of the author and a literary appreciation of the masterpiece. He must become thoroughly familiar with the text. He may profitably read and reread the chapters of the four

books, not always in order, but dipping here and there as inclination directs. Many lovers of "The Imitation" have the habit of opening the book at random and starting to read at the first line that meets the eye. They are all but unanimous in declaring that inevitably they light upon something pertinent to the mood of the moment.

Familiarity with the text will place the student in a position to recognize in "The Imitation of Christ" three distinct essentials of a literary masterpiece. He will discover that it is (1) an expression of life, (2) a commentary on life, and (3) a contribution toward a philosophy of life.

(1) "*The Imitation*" is an expression of life. — Were Thomas à Kempis a mere fanatic who sought to merit heaven by making earth a hell; were he a man who, acting even from the loftiest motives, cut himself off from human joy and human sorrow, human strivings and human love, his book, whatever might be its value from the ascetic viewpoint, would have no literary worth. But à Kempis was preëminently human, "a brother," as George Eliot says, "who, ages ago, felt, and suffered, and renounced." And the tremor of his feelings and the pang of his sufferings and the glory of

his renunciations are not his alone; they are the common heritage of the race.

"The author's genius has such complete control of the subject," writes Brother Azarias, "and handles it with so firm a grasp, that in every sentence we find condensed the experience of ages. It is humanity finding in this simple man an adequate mouthpiece for the utterance of its spiritual wants and soul-yearnings. And his expression is so full and adequate because he regarded things in the white light of God's truth, and saw their nature and their worth clearly and distinctly, as divested of the hues and tints flung around them by passion and illusion. He probed the human heart to its lowest depths and its inmost folds; he searched intentions and motives, and found self lurking in the purest; he explored the windings of human folly and human misery, and discovered them to proceed from self-love and self-gratification."

(2) "*The Imitation*" is a commentary on life.— Readers who have no understanding of, and therefore no sympathy with, monasticism or even Catholicism, will, perhaps, resent the large number of allusions to what pertains to the priesthood and the religious state in "*The Imitation of Christ*." Such persons must bear

in mind that every book must be written from a distinct standpoint, and that Thomas à Kempis, being a monk, wrote from the monastic point of view. The potter is moulded by the clay he kneads.

As a commentary on life, accordingly, "The Imitation of Christ" must be read from the viewpoint from which it was written. This is the only sensible and fruitful method of reading any book. There is Omar Kaayyam. His point of view, shaped by his "Book of verses underneath the bough," his "loaf of bread," his "jug of wine," and his warbling "thou," may not be your point of view; but whether or not you ultimately adopt his attitude toward men and life, you must, to read the "Rubaiyat" with discernment, accept his views for the nonce. Similarly, to read aright "The Imitation of Christ," to grasp the meaning of its author's comments on life, you must don in spirit the white habit of the Canons of St. Augustine and look out upon the world with the eyes of faith through the narrow cloister window of Mount St. Agnes. Such is the only way to attain to any adequate appreciation of "The Imitation" as a commentary on life.

(3) "*The Imitation*" is a contribution toward a philosophy of life. — Knowingly or unknowingly, every normal

human being has a philosophy of life. Some few persons, bereft of the power to grow, have a petrified philosophy which knows no change or shadow of alteration; others, possessed of an undue admiration for what is ready-made, hold fast to some cut-and-dried philosophy; while the men and women who are blessed with some realization of the mystery, the sublimity, and the sacredness of life, make for themselves a philosophy which is incessantly being shaped and modified by experience, by the passing of years, by travel, by friendship, and by books. To this class comes the work of the fifteenth-century monk as a source of light and information, of consolation and of joy.

Scores and scores of men and women of varying temperaments and occupations, of diverse gifts and deeds, ideals and aims, have fallen under the influence of "The Imitation"; and to each of them it has opened new vistas of thought, imparted a keener and more sympathetic knowledge of life. And, in common with the other great books of the world, it suits itself to the comprehension of the scholar and of the man in the street. There are no bounds to the universality of its appeal.

II. THE LIFE OF THOMAS À KEMPIS

The family name of the author of "The Imitation of Christ" was Haemerken, which means "little hammer." The significance of the surname becomes apparent when we learn that Thomas's father, John Haemerken, was a mechanic, most probably an artificer in metals, the trade having doubtless descended from father to son for several generations. The town of Kempen, forty miles north of Cologne, was Thomas's birth-place. Hence the full name of the author of "The Imitation" is Thomas Haemerken of Kempen, or, in the contracted form more generally used, Thomas à Kempis.

Thomas à Kempis was born in 1379. His parents were frugal, hard-working people, noted for their great piety and simplicity of life. The early biographers of the author-monk dwell at great length on the splendid home training which the boy received at the hands of his devoted parents. The outcome of that early training was that, besides securing the rudiments of an education, — for Gertrude, Thomas's mother, was an accomplished woman, and for a time kept a little school in Kempen, — the boy received a strong religious bent,

and at the age of thirteen expressed the desire of devoting his life to the service of God and his fellow-men by embracing the monastic state.

To this determination of their dearly loved son the pious Haemerken made not the slightest demur. Some twelve years before they had made a similar sacrifice when Thomas's elder brother, John Haemerken, resolved to enter the cloister. They lived in the ages of faith, and from the viewpoint of faith their course was clear. They recognized in the boy's yearning for the religious habit the mark of a vocation, a call from God; and to impede the flow of so great a grace they regarded as sinful. Their sentiments on the occasion of the leave-taking were akin to those of holy Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"Little did the humble couple think at the time of that sorrowful parting," says a recent biographer, "that their modest child was destined to become the most famous man of his age, and that generations and generations would rise and bless them for their generous sacrifice in suffering their son to follow the call of God, when they might have so reasonably retained him by

their side to be the comfort and support of their declining days."

Young Haemerken, accordingly, set out for Deventer, in West Friesland, to place himself under the direction of the Brothers of the Common Life. He has given us no details of that hundred-mile journey, which probably led him for some distance along the bank of the historic Rhine and spread before his young eyes many of the riches and beauties of the world which he had resolved to renounce. It was a journey he was to make for the first and last time, for he never returned to his native town and never saw his beloved parents again. Nothing further is known of his father and mother, save that they both had died before the year 1402.

At the training school of the Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer, Thomas Haemerken came under the influence of Florentius Radewyn, the superior of the congregation, a man who, by reason of his virtues, his intellectual attainments, and his marked abilities as organizer and administrator, deserves to rank with Benedict, Dominic, and Ignatius of Loyola. For this devout and learned priest Thomas always entertained the deepest veneration. "Once," he tells us, in the

biography of Florentius which he wrote in later years, "it happened that I was standing near him in choir, and that he turned to our book to sing with us. Standing behind me, he placed his hand upon my shoulder. Delighted and astonished at this gracious condescension, I remained still, scarcely daring to move."

Another man who exercised a profound influence on Thomas at this critical period was Master John Boehm, the rector of the school, who superintended the instruction of the young men in grammar, logic, ethics, and philosophy. Boehm, from all accounts, was an able, conscientious, and methodical pedagogue, and something of a martinet as well. We are told that, in addition to his other duties, Boehm "vigorously presided" over the choir. He was the sort of man who does everything vigorously.

When Thomas Haemerken came to the school for the first time, he had no means of defraying the expenses of his board and tuition, so the kind Florentius gave him a sum sufficient to cover all expenses. This money the boy dutifully presented to Boehm.

"Who gave you this money?" demanded the brusque teacher.

"My master, Florentius."

"Well," continued Boehm, with the gruff kindness characteristic of the man, "you go and take him back his money. For his sake I'll teach you for nothing."

During seven years Thomas à Kempis pursued his studies in the school of the Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer. His closest friend during this period was Arnold of Schoonhoven, a youth of about his own age, noted for his brilliant intellect and edifying life. He and Thomas were room-mates, and formed a little society of mutual admiration, the records of which please and fascinate by reason of their ingenuousness and evident sincerity. Thomas also entertained a warm admiration for Brother John, the community cook, an admiration which was elicited apparently by the good Brother's cheerful manners and devout life rather than by his professional attainments.

In the autumn of 1399, Thomas à Kempis entered the monastery of Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle, where the Brothers of the Common Life lived according to the rules of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, and where his brother, John Haemerken, was prior. For six years Thomas was a postulant, that is, he made additional studies to fit himself for the monastic state. In the seventh year of his sojourn at Mount St. Agnes

he experienced the great joy of receiving the religious habit, and in June of the year following he was permitted to make his final vows. He was ordained priest in 1413.

For the space of some seventy years — what is reckoned now as an exceptionally long lifetime — Thomas Haemerken à Kempis lived the life of a monk at the monastery of Mount St. Agnes. Occasionally, when he had attained prominence in his order, his duties called him away on short journeys, and he shared in the three years' exile of his Brothers at Friesland — an exile resulting from their compliance with the terms of a papal interdict in 1429. With these exceptions Thomas knew no world but that within the monastery walls. It was out of the fulness of his own experience that he wrote, "The cell, constantly dwelt in, groweth sweet . . . a dear friend and a most pleasant comfort."

In the life of a monk there is much that is consoling, much that is depressing, much that is painful, much that is sweet; but as a rule there is nothing that is spectacular. Day in and day out the same round of duties comes and goes; hour after hour marks the regular alternation of prayer and study and labor, labor, study, and prayer. The religious life affords but

a scanty harvest of facts to the gleaner biographer. After all, the good old chroniclers of long ago followed the only practicable course when they summed up the life story of a good monk in these words: "Brother So-and-so lived a holy life and died in the odor of sanctity." The long career of the author of "The Imitation of Christ" at the monastery on the outskirts of Zwolle was almost entirely devoid of sensational events, of happenings to freeze the blood or set the nerves on edge. Externally, at least, it was a life sweetly commonplace. The monastery was a little world in itself, but a world free of worry and bustle, a world free of hectic pleasure and unmanly sin.

The monastery, like so many other institutions of its kind, was situated on what had once been a barren upland, but which the faithful and unremitting labors of the community had changed into a fertile garden. At the foot of the hill the little river Vechte squirmed its lazy way and with its abundance of fish proved itself a faithful friend to the Brothers. On the south side of the cloister enclosure the monks planted an orchard, picturesquely fenced off from the adjoining untilled land by a hedge of wild shrubs. They delved in the sand and in the rocks and laid the foundations

for their convent church and sacristy, two refectories, a kitchen, a storehouse, and a guest chamber. They cut down stubborn hills and filled in gullies and bramble-fringed ditches, and laid out paths and roadways in attractive designs.

"It is not easy to say," writes Thomas à Kempis, in his chronicle of the monastery of Mount St. Agnes, "with what labor and sweat that hilly and sandy spot was reduced to a level and fertile plain. Clearing the ground for the church and the cemetery was a task long and difficult; for an elevation higher than the rest had stood there, and had covered the whole area of the required space. But little by little and at different times that hill was brought down to nothing, and was carted to a deep valley at the north, so that, to the wonder of many, not a vestige of it remained."

But these manual labors did not exclusively occupy the attention of the good Brothers. Besides the time devoted to their religious duties, they spent many hours in intellectual occupations. Theirs was a life of study. They read and wrote and transcribed. Their success as illuminators of manuscripts was unquestioned, and sometimes, by selling some of the labors of their pens, they were enabled to secure funds where-

with to furnish decorations for the altar and to replenish in time of need their scanty larder.

The greater part of Thomas's life was spent, it is safe to say, in the scriptorium of the Mount St. Agnes monastery, where he transcribed the Roman Missal and the entire Bible in four folio volumes, and composed and copied a surprisingly large number of mystical and devotional treatises. He likewise wrote a chronicle of the Mount St. Agnes monastery and biographies of Groot and Radewyn and nine of their disciples. In addition, he was an accomplished and enthusiastic musician.

Thomas à Kempis was also employed in teaching both the younger members of his own community and men who afterwards became prominent in various walks of life. Indeed, some careful readers of "The Imitation" profess to have discovered certain intangible mannerisms of the educator in that masterpiece. Be that as it may, à Kempis must have possessed one of the qualities then as now demanded of the teacher — the power of arousing the enthusiasm of his pupils. He loved books, and declared himself incapable of understanding how a good monk could manifest indifference toward the written thought of the great masters.

Of the inner life of à Kempis during his long career at the Mount St. Agnes monastery we have no authentic record. We have reason to believe that sometimes, when writing in "The Imitation" of "a certain person," he is telling of events in his own spiritual development; but there is danger of pushing this theory too far and of acquiring a false, or at least a misleading, notion of the author-monk. Of his sins he speaks in the strongest terms — an instance of pious exaggeration characteristic of most devout men in his day.

When did Thomas à Kempis write "The Imitation of Christ"? The great book was composed bit by bit during the first twoscore years of his life at Mount St. Agnes. Likely enough, the fifth chapter of the Third Book, dealing with the dignity of the priestly state, was written about the time of his ordination to the priesthood. The other chapters of "The Imitation" came gradually into being, the accumulated fruit of reading, reflection, experience, and prayer. The work was completed and arranged, in the order followed in this edition, when its author was forty years old.

As the years went by, Thomas became one of the most prominent and revered members of the community, holding for several years the offices of proc-

urator, subprior, and master of novices. One by one, he saw most of the older monks, including his brother John, laid at rest in the little cemetery, and he heard new voices chanting with him in the choir stalls. All these varied happenings Thomas records in his chronicle with a studious attention to facts and often with tinges of regret and pathos which plainly show that the monastic habit had robbed him of none of his natural human affection.

The story of the death of Thomas à Kempis is contained in the words of the chronicle which he had begun so many years before and which was continued by an anonymous historian: —

“In the same year [1471], on the feast of St. James the Less, after compline, our dearly beloved Brother, Thomas Haemerken of Kempen, a town in the diocese of Cologne, departed this life in the ninety-second year of his age, the sixty-third of his clothing [in the monastic habit], the fifty-eighth of his priesthood. . . . In his old days, after suffering from dropsy of the limbs, he fell asleep in the Lord, and was buried in the eastern cloister by the side of Brother Peter Herbort.”

The chronicler is sparse and not altogether accurate in details, but other contemporaries furnish us with

facts from which we can draw a composite picture of the author of "The Imitation." He was of medium height and inclined to corpulency. His face was broad and his features massive, of a pronounced Flemish cast. His cheeks had a tinge of brown, bespeaking the absence of worry and the presence of robust health. His eyes were large and bright, the windows through which shone the beauty of a great and noble soul.

Unwittingly, à Kempis has given us the key to his personality in his treatise on the spiritual exercises, one of the many works he composed for the instruction of his novices. The ideal monk, he tells us, is "of a cheerful countenance, calm and pleasant in his discourse, prudent and regular in all his actions, and ever shedding around him peace and blessing." And his favorite motto is a record of life experience: "*Everywhere have I sought for peace, but nowhere have I found it save in a quiet corner with a little book.*"

In November, 1897, a monument to Thomas à Kempis was erected in the Church of St. Michael at Zwolle. The base is of polychrome marble, and on it rests a sarcophagus containing most of the relics of the monk, covered with a black marble slab. Against a background of colored sandstone is a symbolic group of

statuary in which Thomas à Kempis, kneeling, writes down the words of Christ. Below the group is the following inscription in Latin, the first words of "The Imitation":—

"He that followeth me walketh not in darkness."

III. THE BROTHERS OF THE COMMON LIFE

The association of students, scholars, and teachers known as the Brothers of the Common Life was founded by Gerard Groot in the second half of the fourteenth century. Coming from the University of Paris with the degree of master at the early age of seventeen, Groot abandoned himself for a time to a career of pleasure and luxury not altogether compatible with the life of a man in minor orders. He was not slow, however, to discover the inconsistency in his conduct, and, being a man who could do nothing by halves, he determined to devote himself with all his powers to the spread of religion and the betterment of his fellow-men. He received deacon's orders from the Bishop of Utrecht, — like St. Francis of Assisi, he never ventured to take upon himself the dignities and responsibilities of the

priesthood, — and became well known throughout the Netherlands as an eloquent and convincing preacher.

In the course of his travels Groot discovered that the young men, both clerics and laymen, who attended the universities and the special schools, were subjected to temptations of a particularly dangerous kind. At once he began to exert his influence to bring the students under the control of the Gospel precepts and, while continuing their studies, to retain their freshness of mind and cleanliness of life. He was a born leader of men, and his house at Deventer soon became a rendezvous for young men from the schools in need of assistance and advice. In order to minister to the temporal necessities of the poorer of these, Groot set them the task of copying manuscripts, paying them out of his own patrimony.

This was the origin of the religious institute which remained in a flourishing condition up to the time of the Reformation and which exercised a profound effect on the educational and religious ideals of the time. The students and several of their masters began to live in common under the direction of Groot, the fruits of their labors going into a common fund. A similar association for women, known as the Sisters of

the Common Life, grew as an inevitable consequence from the male foundation, and in a few years nearly every town in Holland contained one or more houses of each branch of the association.

When Gerard Groot died in 1384 of a pestilence he had contracted while nursing a sick friend, the direction of the Brothers of the Common Life fell to Florentius Radewyn, one of the earliest disciples of the holy founder. Radewyn came of a good family, and was a graduate of the University of Prague. Like Groot, he had as a young man devoted himself over-assiduously to the pleasures of the world, but he suddenly changed his manner of life and became a priest. Ever afterward he was a model of piety, charity, and devotion.

The first work accomplished by Florentius Radewyn in his capacity of superior was the drawing up of a written rule of life for the association which he governed. The chief points in this rule are given in the life of Thomas à Kempis by Badius. The Brothers were to possess nothing in particular, even the fruits of their individual labors going into a common fund. They were to lead a celibate life, even though they should not be priests or aspirants to the priestly state. They were to live together in the houses of the associa-

tion, and to submit themselves, in all things lawful, to the direction of their superiors. They were forbidden to beg or in any other manner to secure money or goods without paying a fair equivalent. They were to devote themselves, according to their ability and the advice of their superiors, to study, composing books, transcribing manuscripts and teaching. Their ideal was to approach as near as possible to the lives of the primitive Christians.

The institute spread with amazing rapidity. The mother-house of the Brothers, which Florentius had established at Windesheim in 1386, became the centre of a vast religious and educational movement which by the middle of the following century had upwards of two hundred branches in various parts of Europe.

The Brothers of the Common Life were leaders in the science and the art of education in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They insisted that learning was not the privilege of the few but the heritage of the many. While not neglecting the study of the classics, they dwelt much upon the importance of a working knowledge of the mother-tongue. They were among the first to make use of the new invention of printing. And in numerous respects they were ahead of their

times. "The earnestness, conscientiousness, ingenuity and true critical spirit they manifested," says Maccall, "have caused them to be regarded as the creators of modern philology."

The celebrated scholar Erasmus received his early training and acquired his ideals of scholarship in the schools of the Brothers of the Common Life. So did the great Cardinal Cusa and the Blessed Peter Canisius and Thomas à Kempis. Effectively did this association of devout clerics and scholarly laymen prepare the way for the great revival of learning known as the Renaissance. Alexander Hegius and Rudolph Agricola, both pupils of the Brothers and of Thomas à Kempis, were in the front rank of the enthusiasts who successfully labored for the revival of the sciences in the Netherlands and Germany.

The institutes of the Brothers of the Common Life gave many promising novices to the Cistercians and the Carthusians as well as to the secular clergy. Most of the religiously inclined young men who studied under the Brothers eventually joined the association and lived in the monasteries of the institute according to the rule of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. This last fact has occasioned considerable controversy

regarding Thomas à Kempis. Was he a member of the Brothers of the Common Life or one of the Canons Regular? He was both; that is, while remaining a disciple of Groot and Florentius, he adopted the rules of the Augustinian Canons — (not to be confounded with the monks of St. Augustine) — in accordance with the recommendations given by Groot to his spiritual children.

IV. THE SOURCES OF "THE IMITATION OF CHRIST"

(1) *The Bible*. — "Study 'The Imitation,'" writes Sir Francis Cruise, "and it is impossible not to realize that first of all, and above all, it is saturated throughout with the Sacred Scriptures. No one can read many sentences in it which do not recall passages in the Old and the New Testament. It reflects them as a mirror, applying them with unmatched deftness to meet the wants and soul-yearnings of poor humanity. Be the quotations direct or paraphrastic, there they are at every step. All this is evident to those who know the Bible well."

According to Doctor Pohl, unquestionably the most distinguished Kempist scholar of our time, "The Imi-

tation" contains more than eleven hundred quotations from the Bible, most of them being taken bodily from the Latin Vulgate. In many cases, however, Thomas à Kempis embodies the quotation in a brief explanation of its meaning, in the form of a paraphrase. The paraphrase, by the way, was a favorite device for expounding the Scriptures, not only among the Brothers of the Common Life, but in all the monastic orders.

The very title of à Kempis's masterpiece is in itself indicative of the Biblical influence on its author. The imitation of Christ is dependent on a knowledge of Christ, and that knowledge may be secured by means of the New Testament. A devout Catholic, à Kempis studied the Bible as a divinely inspired document, regarding the New Testament as a record of the perfection and fulfilment of the types and prophecies contained in the Old Testament.

We have excellent reason for believing that the mind of the author of "The Imitation" was saturated, so to speak, with Biblical lore. All his writings, notably his instructions for novices, are replete with Scriptural quotations and allusions. Besides, we know that he transcribed the entire Bible in four folio volumes.

This pronounced Biblical influence is unquestionably

one reason for the tremendous popularity of "The Imitation." À Kempis drank deep at the fountain of spiritual truth and beauty until much of that truth and beauty became a part of his own mind and spirit. It is no exaggeration to say that every chapter of "The Imitation" is the product of long and reverent meditation on certain passages of Holy Writ. Thomas à Kempis is the commentator paramount, the gifted teacher who opens to us the meaning of the sacred text.

Several recent writers, unduly influenced by the fiction that the Catholic Church proscribed the Bible from the use of the laity, adopt the theory popularized in English by the brilliant but unreliable Thomas de Quincey, that "The Imitation" "came at a time when the Bible was practically a sealed-up fountain of inspired truth," and that "it was the denial of Scripture fountains to thirsty lands which made this rill of Scripture truth so passionately welcome." The fact is, that the Bible was far more accessible in the fifteenth century than was the work of à Kempis. "The Imitation" must rightly be regarded as a luminous exposition of Holy Writ, not as a popular substitute for the Bible.

"Throughout my long life," continues Dr. Cruise, "I have striven to discover and explain the mysterious

power of 'The Imitation.' It has ever seemed clear that one element of that power is à Kempis's capability of interpreting and applying Scripture for each and every one of us. The Holy Scriptures are a profound study, often obscure and needing explanation. To me à Kempis is the true gifted expounder of the great lessons."

(2) *The Ancient Classical Writers.* — A popular impression concerning the Renascence is that, previous to that remarkable movement in life and thought, the ancient classics were unknown in Western Europe. Facts indicate the contrary. It is true that the Renascence gave a mighty impetus to the study of the classics, and made interest in the ancient writers more deep and more widespread; but the great poets, orators, and dramatists of Greece and Rome had their enthusiastic following in the West long before the dawn of the Renascence.

This applies especially to the monasteries which were ever the abodes of learning. The library at Mount St. Agnes had its representation of what the good Brothers called the "pagan" books, and there Thomas à Kempis acquired a first-hand acquaintance with Seneca, Ovid, Cicero, Horace, Virgil, Lucian, and Marcus Aurelius.

It is questionable if he read Greek, but at all events he must have happened upon Aristotle either in the original or in a Latin translation, for "The Imitation" shows unmistakably the influence of the Greek philosopher upon whose method of thought the Schoolmen raised the imposing structure of Scholastic Philosophy.

Reading the masterful "pagans" from the monastic viewpoint, Thomas à Kempis assuredly found much that he could not consistently indorse, and such he passed over in silence. But he likewise found in such writers as Seneca and Marcus Aurelius expressions of those basic truths of humanity that shine forth from the soul of all thinking men, be they Jews or proselytes, Cretes or Arabians; and these he made by reflection a part of himself and incorporated in his masterpiece. The author of "The Imitation" was wise enough to realize that out of every Nazareth comes at least a modicum of good.

(3) *The Fathers of the Christian Church.* — Besides being a devout and sedulous student of the Holy Scriptures, Thomas à Kempis was an assiduous reader of the Fathers of the Christian Church, whose writings were rated among the most precious of the manuscripts treasured in the Mount St. Agnes monastery. Scholars

have found in "The Imitation" passages that indicate the influence of St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great, St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, the most noted exponent of the Scholastic Philosophy.

The influence of the last-named writer deserves special emphasis. An opinion current among many critics is that à Kempis wrote "The Imitation" in a mood of revolt against the philosophy of the Schoolmen, and that he shows but scanty regard for that much-misunderstood system of thought. While it is undeniably true that à Kempis, with the impatience born of directness and practicality of mind, had little regard for what was ultraformal and recondite in the Scholastic system, he nevertheless recognized in the theology of the Angelic Doctor, as Thomas of Aquin was called, the most consistent presentation of the rational basis of Catholic dogma and morals. While the author of "The Imitation," intent upon conversion of heart and growth in holiness, cries out, "What have we to do with genera and species?" he does not fail, when occasion arises, to pay to the Scholastic system the tribute of his esteem. The backbone of the Third Book, as has been frequently pointed out, is the system of St. Thomas.

“The Imitation of Christ” does not, then, stand for a reaction against the philosophy of the Schoolmen ; it is from one point of view a protest against the wasteful and ridiculous excess of controversy and discussion to which that system of thought was carried by many of its fourteenth-century devotees. À Kempis, it must be remembered, was preëminently of a practical turn of mind, and he had a pious horror of the finespun and purely theoretical and speculative arguments which characterized Scholasticism in certain of its ramifications.

The Fathers of the Church whose influence on “The Imitation of Christ” is most strongly marked are St. Augustine and St. Bernard. The former was the patron saint of the Canons Regular among whom à Kempis was enrolled, and the writings of the illustrious Bishop of Hippo were in consequence held in high esteem by the Brothers of the Common Life. St. Bernard seems to have been the favorite ascetic writer of the Mount St. Agnes canons. David Busch, a contemporary writer, tells us that the brothers John and Thomas à Kempis made copious transcripts from the writings of the Abbot of Clairvaux.

(4) *The School of Windesheim*. — The principal house

of the religious association established by Gerard Groot was situated at Windesheim, as a consequence of which the society was sometimes known as the Devout Canons of Windesheim. Many of the members devoted themselves to the writing of treatises relating to the religious life, asceticism, and the nature, purpose, and scope of the New Devotion, as the religious revival instituted by Groot was colloquially called. These writers are known as the School of Windesheim.

An admirer of Groot, a member of the Devout Canons and a devotee of the New Devotion, it was inevitable that à Kempis should be profoundly influenced by the spiritual writings emanating from the School of Windesheim. Indeed, "The Imitation of Christ" is but one out of countless spiritual works to which the Brothers of the Common Life stood sponsor. It stands alone to-day, not because of its inherent originality, but because its author, besides being versed in the science of the saints, had a profound understanding of, and sympathy for, humanity, and possessed, in addition, the elusive gift of literary expression.

The writers belonging to the School of Windesheim who appear to have exerted the greatest influence on Thomas à Kempis are the following: Peter Gerlach,

author of "The Soliloquy of the Soul," an interior monologue in form somewhat resembling "The Imitation"; John von Huesden, whose treatise on the life and passion of Christ follows the same order of ideas as that observed in à Kempis's masterpiece; Henry von Mande, a prolific writer to whom are attributed fourteen distinct works on contemplation and the spiritual life; and John von Schoonhoven, whose epistle to his nephew Simon bears a striking resemblance to passages in the second, thirteenth, and twentieth chapters of the First Book of "The Imitation of Christ."

(5) *Other sources.* — A careful study of "The Imitation" reveals a few other sources from which à Kempis drew the material which he wove into his superb literary fabric. The most important of these are the Roman Missal and the writings of St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the order of Friars Minor.

V. THEORIES OF AUTHORSHIP

The differences of opinion at various times existing concerning the authorship of the Homeric poems, the Shakespearian dramas and the perplexing Letters of Junius, have been duplicated in regard to "The Imita-

tion of Christ." The fact that several early editions of the book were printed anonymously gave rise to almost countless theories of authorship. At one time more than thirty rival claimants were, by proxy, in the field, and the question has been the occasion of a well-nigh interminable literary warfare and the shedding of torrents of ink.

Most of the discussion, which began in the fifteenth century, and even in our time has not wholly died away, deals with the claims of four alleged authors of "The Imitation": St. Bernard, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux in the twelfth century; Jean Charlier de Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris; Giovanni Gersen, supposedly a Benedictine monk and abbot of a monastery at Vercelli in Italy; and Thomas à Kempis of the monastery of Mount St. Agnes in the Netherlands.

Studied in its larger outlines, the history of this unique and not always edifying controversy is interesting. Of forty-eight editions of "The Imitation" printed in the fifteenth century, twenty-eight attribute the authorship to Gerson, twelve to à Kempis and two to St. Bernard, while the remaining six assign the work to no definite author. Conditions are reversed in the

sixty-five editions published in the following century, when thirty-seven editors favor à Kempis and twenty-five insist upon the Gerson theory of authorship. The three remaining editions published in the sixteenth century are anonymous.

The meteoric career of the theory favoring the claims of the Italian Gersen furnishes a remarkable contribution to the history of "The Imitation" authorship, and forms a valuable addition to an unwritten chapter in Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature." The limitations of the present work preclude any extended presentation of the facts in the case. The subject is luminously dealt with by Sir Francis Cruise and Father Semeria, both of whom favor the à Kempis theory of authorship. Monseignor Puyol is the most prominent champion of Gersen.

The majority of modern critics are now agreed that, far from writing "The Imitation of Christ," Giovanni Gersen wrote nothing at all, for the excellent reason that he never existed. He is a child born of an error in spelling. A manuscript of "The Imitation" was found at Arona in Italy in the seventeenth century, bearing a signature variously deciphered as Gesen, Gessen, and Gersen. It was obviously a corruption of

Gerson, the name of the chancellor of the University of Paris ; but it served as the nucleus of a unique theory, fathered by the Jesuit Rossignoli, which for a time had a host of adherents. Pressure was brought to bear upon Cardinal Richelieu to have the name of Gersen appear on the title-page of the sumptuous edition of "The Imitation" his eminence had ordered in 1640. The claims of à Kempis were likewise urged, until Richelieu, with characteristic diplomacy, extricated himself from the quandary by allowing the edition to appear anonymously. The fact that there was talk of erecting a statue to the mythical Gersen at Cavaglia prompts a brilliant writer of our own time to remark that a copyist's error in substituting an *e* for an *o* grew into a man, a Benedictine abbot, a writer, and a statue.

The claim in favor of St. Bernard, conceded to be untenable on the grounds both of internal and external evidence, was practically abandoned in the sixteenth century. Against the contention that "The Imitation" is the work of Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris, the following objections are urged: 1. The author of "The Imitation" was obviously a member of a religious order ; Gerson was not. 2. There is a notable disparity in literary style between "The Imitation"

and the works known to have been written by Gerson. 3. Not a single manuscript of "The Imitation" appearing during Gerson's life assigns the authorship to him. 4. The exhaustive list of the chancellor's writings, prepared by his brother, makes no mention of "The Imitation." 5. Not one contemporary witness is to be found in his favor.

Several relatively recent writers, including Arthur Loth, Tamizey de Larroque, and the scholarly Dominican, the late Father Denifle, hold that "The Imitation of Christ" is the work of an unknown German writer of a date anterior to à Kempis; but the findings of present-day critics are so strongly in support of the à Kempis theory of authorship that the situation may be safely summed up in these words of Leopold Delisle, director of the National Library at Paris: "For the learned who have studied and understood this subject the controversy is at an end, and in favor of Thomas à Kempis."

Following is an outline of the main arguments adduced to prove that "The Imitation of Christ" was written by Thomas à Kempis:—

1. *Evidence of contemporaries.*—Upwards of two-score contemporary witnesses, several of whom knew

him personally and three of whom were members of the religious society to which he belonged, specifically pronounce Thomas à Kempis to be the author of "The Imitation."

2. *Evidence based on manuscripts.* — A large number of the earliest and most trustworthy manuscripts of "The Imitation" bear the name of à Kempis as author. Many of them date from periods before the death of Thomas à Kempis in 1471.

Among the manuscripts in the Royal Library at Brussels there are, in one bundle, "The Imitation of Christ" and nine other treatises, all in the same handwriting, and bearing the words : —

FINITUS ET COMPLETUS ANNO DOMINI MCCCC
XLI PER MANUS FRATRIS THOMÆ KEMPIS IN
MONTE SANCTE AGNETIS PROPE ZWOLLIS.

The convent of Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle, was where Thomas à Kempis lived during seventy-one years of his long life. A facsimile reproduction of this autograph manuscript, with an introduction in French by Charles Ruelans, was published in 1879.

3. *Internal evidence.* — "The Imitation" is found to resemble the accepted writings of Thomas à Kempis

in numerous mannerisms, in the peculiar use of certain Latin words, and in the employment of "Hollandisms," or Dutch idioms.

Both in thought and expression "The Imitation" shows the influence of the religious movement known as the School of Windesheim, with which Thomas à Kempis was closely identified.

À Kempis was a copyist as well as an author, and during his lifetime transcribed the Bible and many of the writings of St. Bernard. "The Imitation" reveals the familiarity of its author with both works.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

OF THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST

THE FIRST BOOK

ADMONITIONS, USEFUL FOR A SPIRITUAL LIFE

CHAPTER I

Of the Imitation of Christ and Contempt of All Worldly Vanities

HE that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened and be delivered from all blindness of heart. Let therefore our chief study be to meditate upon the life of JESUS Christ.°

2. The doctrine of Christ surpasseth all the doctrines of holy men, and he that hath His Spirit will find therein a hidden manna.°

But many, albeit they often hear the Gospel of Christ, are yet but little affected, because they have not the spirit of Christ.

2 OF CONTEMPT OF ALL WORLDLY VANITIES

Whosoever then would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ.

3. What will it avail thee to be engaged in profound discussions concerning the Trinity, if thou be void of humility and art thereby displeasing to the Trinity?

Truly, sublime words do not make a man holy and just; but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I had rather feel compunction than know how to define it.

If thou knewest the whole Bible by heart and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it profit thee without the love of God and without grace?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except to love God, and Him only to serve.

This is the highest wisdom, by contempt of the world^o to tend towards the kingdom of Heaven.

4. It is therefore vanity to seek after perishable riches and to trust in them.

It is also vanity to strive after honors and to climb to high degree.

It is vanity to follow the lusts of the flesh and to desire that for which thou must afterwards suffer grievous punishment.

It is vanity to wish to live long and not to care to live well.

It is vanity to mind only this present life and not to make provision for those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which speedily passeth away, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy abideth.

5. Call often to mind that proverb, — The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing.

Endeavor therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things and to turn thyself to the invisible.

For they that follow their evil passions stain their own consciences and lose the grace of God.

CHAPTER II

Of Having a Humble Opinion of Ourselves

ALL men naturally desire knowledge; but what availeth knowledge^o without the fear of God?

Indeed, a humble husbandman that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who, though occupied in studying the course of the stars, neglecteth himself.

Whoso knoweth himself is lowly in his own eyes and delighteth not in the praises of men.

4 OF HAVING A HUMBLE OPINION OF OURSELVES

If I understood all things in the world and had not charity, what would it avail me in the sight of God who will judge me according to my deeds?

2. Cease from an inordinate desire of knowledge, for therein is much distraction and deceit.

Learned men are anxious to seem learned to others and to be called wise.

Many things there are to know which little or nothing profit the soul; and he is very unwise who minds other things more than those that tend to his salvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life giveth ease to the mind, and a pure conscience inspireth great confidence in God.

3. The more thou knowest and the better thou understandest, the more strictly shalt thou be judged unless thy life be also the more holy.

Be not therefore elated in thine own mind because of any art or science, but rather let the knowledge given thee make thee afraid.

If thou thinkest that thou understandest and knowest much, yet know that there be many more things which thou knowest not.

Affect not to be overwise, but rather acknowledge thine own ignorance.

Why wilt thou prefer thyself before others, seeing there be many more learned and more skilful in the Scripture ° than thou?

If thou wouldst know or learn anything profitably, desire to be unknown and to be considered of little worth.

4. The highest and most profitable lesson is to know truly and despise one's self.

It is great wisdom and perfection to think nothing of ourselves and to think always well and highly of others.

If thou shouldest see another openly sin or commit some heinous offence, yet oughtest thou not to think the better of thyself; for thou knowest not how long thou shalt be able to stand.

We are all frail, but do thou regard none more frail than thyself.

CHAPTER III

Of the Doctrine of Truth

HAPPY is he whom truth by itself doth teach, not by figures and words that pass away, but as it is in itself.

Our own opinion and our own feelings often deceive us, discerning but little.

What availeth it to cavil and dispute much about dark and hidden things, for ignorance of which we shall not be reproved at the day of judgment?

It is a great folly to neglect the things that are profitable and necessary, and to choose to dwell upon those that are curious and hurtful. We have eyes and see not.

2. And what have we to do with *genera*° and *species*°? He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh, is delivered from many questionings.

From one Word are all things, and all things utter one word; and this is the *Beginning* which also speaketh unto us.

No man without that Word understandeth or judgeth rightly.

He to whom all things are one, who reduceth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may enjoy a quiet mind and remain at peace in God.

O God, who art the truth, make me one with thee in everlasting love.

It wearieth me often to read and hear many things; in thee is all that I would have and can desire.

Let all teachers hold their peace, let all creatures be silent in thy sight; speak thou alone unto me.

3. The more a man is at one within himself and becometh of single heart, so much the more and higher things doth he understand without labor; for he receiveth the light of wisdom from above.

A pure, simple, and steadfast spirit is not distracted, though it be employed in many works; for it doeth all for the honor of God, and being at rest within, seeketh not itself in anything it doth.

What hinder and trouble thee more than the unmortified affections of thine own heart?

A good and devout man arrangeth within himself beforehand those things which he ought to do.

Neither do they draw him to the desires of an inordinate inclination, but he ordereth them according to the direction of right reason.

Who hath a greater combat than he that laboreth to overcome himself?

This ought to be our endeavor, to conquer ourselves and daily to wax stronger, and to grow in holiness.

4. All perfection in this life hath some imperfection mixed with it, and no knowledge of ours is without some darkness.

A humble knowledge of thyself^o is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning.

Yet learning is not to be blamed,^o nor the mere knowledge of any thing whatsoever, for that is good in itself and ordained by God ; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred.

But because many endeavor rather to get knowledge than to live well, therefore they are often deceived, and reap little or no fruit.

5. Oh, if men bestowed as much labor in the rooting out of vices and the planting of virtues as they do in proposing questions, there would not be so many evils done, nor so great scandal in the world, nor such laxity in monasteries.

Truly, at the day of judgment we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done; not how well we have spoken, but how religiously we have lived.

Tell me, where are all those doctors and masters^o with whom thou wast well acquainted whilst they lived and flourished in learning ?

Others occupy their chairs and perhaps scarce ever think of those who went before them. In their lifetime they seemed to be something, but now they are not spoken of.

6. Oh, how quickly doth the glory of the world pass away ! Would that their lives had been in keeping

with their learning! Then had their study and reading been to good purpose.

How many perish by reason of vain and worldly learning, who take little care of the serving of God.

And because they rather choose to be great than humble, therefore they become vain in their own imaginings.

He is truly great who hath great love.

He is truly great that is little in his own eyes and that maketh no account of any height of honor.

He is truly wise who accounteth all earthly things as dung, that he may win Christ.

And he is truly learned who doeth the will of God, and forsaketh his own will.

CHAPTER IV

Of Wisdom and Forethought in our Actions

WE must not trust every saying or suggestion, but warily and patiently ponder things according to the will of God.

Yet, alas, such is our weakness, that we often rather believe and speak evil of others than good.

But perfect men do not easily credit every one who

speaks to them, for they know that human frailty is prone to evil and very subject to error in words.

2. It is great wisdom not to be rash in thy doings nor to stand stiffly in thine own opinions; as also not to believe every thing which thou hearest, nor immediately to relate again to others what thou hast heard or dost believe.

Consult with ~~H~~im that is wise and of sound judgment and seek to be instructed by one better than thyself, rather than to follow thine own inventions.

A good life maketh a man wise according to God and giveth him experience in many things.

The more humble a man is in himself and the more subject unto God, the wiser shall he be in all things and the more at peace.

CHAPTER V

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures °

TRUTH, not eloquence, is to be sought for in Holy Scripture.

Each part of the Scripture is to be read in the same spirit in which it was written.

We should rather search after profit in the Scriptures than after subtle arguments.

We ought to read plain and devout books as willingly as those high and profound.

Let not the authority of the writer be a stumbling-block, whether he be of great or small learning; but let the love of pure truth draw thee to read.

Inquire not who spoke this or that, but mark what is spoken.

2. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever. God speaketh unto us in sundry ways without respect of persons.

Our own curiosity often hindereth us in reading the Scriptures, when we will examine and discuss that which we should rather pass over without more ado.

If thou desire to profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith; nor ever desire the reputation of being learned.

Inquire willingly, and hear with silence the words of holy men. Let not the parables of the elders displease thee, for they are not given without cause.

CHAPTER VI

Of Inordinate Affections

WHENSOEVER a man desireth any thing inordinately, he becometh presently disquieted in himself.

The proud and covetous can never rest; the poor and humble in spirit dwell in much peace.

The man that is not yet perfectly dead to himself is quickly tempted and overcome in small and trifling things.

The weak in spirit, he that is yet in a manner carnal and prone to the things of sense, can hardly withdraw himself altogether from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad when he withdraweth himself from them; and is easily angered when any one opposeth him.

2. And if he hath followed his appetite,^o he is presently disquieted with remorse of conscience; for that he hath yielded to his passion, which profiteth him nothing to the obtaining of the peace which he sought.

True peace of heart therefore is got by resisting our passions, not by obeying them.

Peace then is not in the heart of a carnal man, nor in

him that is given to outward things, but in the spiritual and devout man.

CHAPTER VII

Of Avoiding Vain Hope and Pride

HE is vain that putteth his trust in man or in any created thing.

Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of JESUS Christ, nor to be esteemed poor in this world.

Confide not in thyself, but place thy hope in God.

Do what lieth in thy power and God will assist thy good will.

Trust not in thine own knowledge nor in the skill of any living creature, but rather in the grace of God, who helpeth the humble and humbleth the proud.

2. Glory not in wealth, if thou have it, nor in friends because they are powerful, but in God who giveth all things and who desireth to give thee Himself above all things.

Esteem not thyself for thy stature nor for the beauty of thy person, which may be disfigured and destroyed by a little sickness.

Please not thyself in thy natural gifts or ability, lest

14 *TOO MUCH FAMILIARITY IS TO BE SHUNNED*

thereby thou displease God, to whom appertaineth all the good whatsoever thou hast by nature.

3. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps in the sight of God, who knoweth what is in man, thou be accounted worse than they.

Be not proud of well-doing; for the judgment of God is far different from the judgment of men, and that which pleaseth them often offendeth Him.

If there be any good in thee, believe that there is much more in others, that so thou mayest preserve humility.

It hurteth thee not to submit to all men; but it hurteth thee much to prefer thyself even to one.

The humble enjoy continual peace, but in the heart of the proud are envy and frequent indignation.

CHAPTER VIII

That too much Familiarity is to be Shunned.

LAY not thy heart open to every one, but treat of thy affairs with the wise and such as fear God.

Converse not much with the young nor with strangers.

Flatter not the rich: neither do thou seek the society of the great.

Keep company with the humble and simple, with the devout and virtuous; and confer with them of those things that may edify.

Be not familiar with any woman; but, in general, commend all good women to God.

Desire to be familiar only with God and His angels, and avoid the acquaintance of men.

2. We must have love towards all, but familiarity with all is not expedient.

Sometimes it falleth out that a person unknown is much esteemed by us from the good report given him by others, whose presence notwithstanding is not grateful to the eyes of those who see him.

We think sometimes to please others by our intimacy, and we rather displease them with those bad qualities which they discover in us.

CHAPTER IX

Of Obedience and Subjection

IT is a great matter to live in obedience, to be under a superior and not to be at our own disposing.

It is much safer to obey than to govern.

Many live under obedience rather out of necessity

than for love; such are discontented, and easily repine. Neither can they attain to freedom of mind, unless they willingly and heartily put themselves under obedience for the love of God.

Go whither thou wilt, thou shalt find no rest, but in humble subjection under the government of a superior. Many have deceived themselves, imagining to find happiness in change.

2. True it is, that every one willingly doeth that which agreeth with his own liking and inclineth most to those that are of his own mind.

But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes cease, for the sake of peace, to adhere to our own opinion.

Who is so wise that he can know all things perfectly?

Be not therefore too confident in thine own opinion, but be willing to hear the views of others.

Though thy own opinion be good, if yet thou partest with it for God, and followest the opinion of another, this shall turn to thy profit.

3. I have often heard that it is safer to hear and to take counsel than to give it.

It may also come to pass that a man's opinion may be good; but to refuse to yield to others when reason or occasion requireth it, is a mark of pride and obstinacy.

CHAPTER X

Of Avoiding Many Words

FLY the tumult of men as much as thou canst; for the treating of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, although it be done with sincere intention; for we are quickly defiled and enthralled by vanity.

Oftentimes I could wish that I had held my peace and that I had not been in company.

Why do we so willingly talk and gossip one with another, since we seldom cease before we have hurt our conscience?

We are so willing to talk because, by discoursing one with another, we seek to receive comfort and desire to ease the mind wearied with many thoughts:

And we very willingly talk and think of those things which we most love or desire, or else of those things which we most dislike.

2. But alas, it is often in vain, and to no purpose; for this outward comfort is the cause of no small loss of inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray, lest our time pass away idly.

If it be lawful and expedient for thee to speak, speak those things that may edify.^o

Evil habit and neglect of our own growth in grace give too much liberty to thoughtless speech.

But conversation on spiritual things doth greatly further our spiritual growth, especially when persons of one mind and spirit associate together in God.

CHAPTER XI

Of Acquiring Peace and of Zeal for Growth in Holiness

WE might enjoy much peace if we would not busy ourselves with the words and deeds of other men and with things which do not concern us.

How can he abide long in peace who thrusteth himself into the cares of others, who seeketh occasions abroad, who is little or seldom inwardly recollected?

Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

2. Why were some of the saints so perfect and contemplative? Because they labored wholly to mortify in themselves all earthly desires, and therefore they

could with their whole heart fix themselves upon God and be free for holy retirement.

We are too much led by our passions and too solicitous for transitory things.

We also seldom overcome any one vice perfectly, and are not inflamed with a fervent desire to grow better every day; and therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

3. If we were thoroughly in earnest and not entangled with outward things, then should we be able to relish divine things and to have some experience of heavenly contemplation.

The greatest and, indeed, the whole impediment is that we are not free from passions and lusts, neither do we endeavor to walk in the perfect way of the saints; and when but a small adversity befalleth us, we are too quickly dejected and turn ourselves to human consolations.

4. If we would endeavor like brave men to stand in the battle, surely we should feel the assistance of God from Heaven.

For He who giveth us occasion to fight, to the end that we may get the victory, is ready to succor those that fight and that trust in His grace.

If we regard our progress in religious life as progress only in some outward observances, our devotion will quickly be at an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that being freed from passions, we may find rest to our souls.

5. If every year we would root out one vice, we should soon become perfect men.

But now oftentimes we perceive, on the contrary, that we were better and purer at the beginning of our conversion,^o than many years after our profession.^o

Our fervor and growth should increase daily; but now it is accounted a great matter if a man can retain but some part of his first fervor.^o

If we would do but a little violence to ourselves at the beginning, then should we be able to perform all things afterwards with ease and delight.

6. It is hard to forego that to which we are accustomed, and yet harder to go against our own will.

But if thou dost not overcome small and easy things, when wilt thou overcome harder things?

Resist thy inclination in the very beginning and unlearn evil habits, lest perhaps by little and little they draw thee into greater difficulties.

Oh, if thou didst but consider how much inward

peace unto thyself and joy unto others thou wouldest procure by conducting thyself well, I think that thou wouldest be more careful of thy spiritual progress.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Profit of Adversity

IT is good that we have sometimes troubles and crosses, for they often make a man enter into himself and consider that he is here in banishment and ought not to place his trust in any worldly thing.

It is good that we be sometimes contradicted and harshly and unfairly judged, and this although we do and intend well.

These things often help us to humility and defend us from vain glory ; for we are more inclined to seek God for our inward witness, when outwardly we be condemned by men and there is no credit given to us.

2. And therefore a man should rest wholly in God, that he need not to seek many comforts of men.

When a good man is afflicted, tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts, he understandeth better the great

need he hath of God, without whom he perceiveth he can do nothing that is good.

Then also he sorroweth, lamenteth, and prayeth by reason of the miseries he suffereth.

Then he is weary of living longer and wisheth that death would come, that he might depart and be with Christ.

Then also he well perceiveth that perfect security and full peace cannot be had in this world.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Resisting Temptation

SO long as we live in this world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Hence it is written in Job, — The life of man upon earth is a life of temptation.

Every one therefore ought to be careful about his temptations, and to watch in prayer, lest the devil find occasion to deceive; for he never sleepeth, but goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

No man is so perfect and holy but he hath sometimes temptations, and we cannot be altogether without them.

2. Temptations are often very profitable to us though they be troublesome and grievous, for through them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the saints passed through many tribulations and temptations and profited thereby ; but they that could not bear temptations became reprobate and fell away.

There is no order so holy nor place so secret that there be not temptations or adversities in it.

3. There is no man that is altogether free from temptations whilst he liveth on earth ; for the root thereof is in ourselves, who are born with an inclination to evil.

When one temptation or tribulation goeth away, another cometh ; and we shall ever have something to suffer, because we are fallen from the state of original happiness.°

Many seek to fly temptations and fall more grievously into them.

By flight alone we cannot overcome, but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies.

4. He that avoideth them but outwardly, and doth not pluck them up by the roots, shall profit little ; yea, temptations will the sooner return unto him and will be more violent than before.

By little and little and by patience with long-suffering, through God's help, thou shalt more easily overcome than by violence and thine own disquietude.

Often take counsel in temptations and deal not roughly with him that is tempted; but give him comfort, as thou wouldest wish to be done to thyself.

5. The beginning of all evil temptations is inconstancy of mind and small confidence in God.

For as a ship without a helm is tossed to and fro by the waves, so the man who is careless and forsaketh his purpose is many ways tempted.

Fire trieth iron and temptation a just man.

We know not oftentimes what we are able to do, but temptation shows us what we are.

Yet we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of the temptation; for the enemy is then more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of our hearts but be resisted at the very gate on his first knocking.

Wherefore one said,

Resist beginnings; all too late the cure,

When ills have gathered strength through long delay.°

For first there cometh to the mind a bare thought of

evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight and evil motion, and then consent.

And so by little and little our wicked enemy getteth complete entrance when he is not resisted in the beginning.

And the longer a man is negligent in resisting, the weaker doth he become daily in himself, and the stronger the enemy against him.

6. Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion, some at the end.

Others again are much troubled almost through the whole of their life.

Some are but slightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the Divine appointment, which weigheth the states and deserts of men and ordaineth all things for the welfare of His own chosen ones.

7. We ought not therefore to despair when we are tempted, but so much the more fervently to pray unto God that He will vouchsafe to help us in all tribulations; for He will surely, according to the words of St. Paul, make with the temptation such issue, that we may be able to bear it.

Let us therefore humble our souls under the hand of God in all temptations and tribulations, for He will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

8. In temptations and afflictions a man is proved as regards how much he hath profited ; and his reward is thereby the greater, and his virtues do more eminently shine forth.

Neither is it any such great thing if a man be devout and fervent when he feeleth no affliction ; but if in time of adversity he bear himself patiently, there is hope then of great growth in grace.

Some are kept from great temptations and in small ones which do daily occur are often overcome, to the end that, being humbled, they may never presume on themselves in great matters since they are worsted in things so small.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Avoiding Rash Judgment

TURN thine eyes unto thyself, and beware thou judge not the deeds of other men. In judging of others a man laboreth in vain, often erreth and easily sinneth ; but in judging and examining himself, he always laboreth fruitfully.

We often judge of things according as we fancy them,

for personal feeling bereaves us easily of a right judgment.

If God were always the pure object of our desire, we should not be so easily deceived through erring judgment.

2. But oftentimes something lurketh within, or else occurreth from without, which draweth us after it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and know it not.

They seem also to live in good peace of mind when things are done according to their will and opinion, but if things happen otherwise than they desire they are straightway moved and much vexed.

The diversities of judgments and opinions cause oftentimes dissensions between friends and countrymen, between religious and devout persons.

3. An established custom is with difficulty broken, and no man is willing to be led farther than himself can see.

If thou dost more rely upon thine own reason or industry than upon that power which bringeth thee under the obedience of JESUS CHRIST, it will be long before thou become illuminated; for God will have us perfectly subject unto Him, that, being inflamed with His love, we may transcend the narrow limits of human reason.

CHAPTER XV

Of Works of Charity

FOR no worldly thing, nor for the love of any man, is any evil to be done ; yet, for the welfare of one that standeth in need, a good work is sometimes to be intermitted without any scruple, or rather to be changed for a better.

For by doing this, a good work is not lost, but changed into a better.

Without charity the outward work profiteth nothing ; but whatsoever is done in charity, be it never so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, becometh wholly fruitful.

For God weigheth more with how much love a man worketh, than how much he doeth.

He doeth much that loveth much.°

2. He doeth much that doeth a thing well. He doeth well that rather serveth the common weal than his own will.

Oftentimes a work seemeth to be of charity, and it is rather a work of the flesh ; because natural inclination,

self-will, hope of reward, and desire of our own interest are motives seldom absent.

3. He that hath true and perfect charity seeketh himself in nothing, but only desireth in all things that the glory of God should be exalted.

He also envieth none, because he seeketh no private good ; neither doth he will to rejoyce in himself, but wisheth above all things to be made happy in the enjoyment of God.

He attributeth nothing that is good to any man, but wholly referreth it unto God, from whom as from their fountain all things proceed ; in whom all the saints do rest as in their last end and highest fruition.

If a man had but one spark of true charity, he would certainly discern that all earthly things are full of vanity.

CHAPTER XVI

Of Bearing with the Faults of Others

THOSE things that a man cannot amend in himself or in others, he ought to suffer patiently until God order them otherwise.

Think that perhaps it is better so for thy trial and

patience, without which all our good deeds are not much to be esteemed.

Thou oughtest to pray, notwithstanding, when thou hast such impediments, that God would vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest bear them rightly.

2. If one that is once or twice warned will not give over, contend not with him ; but commit all to God, that His will may be done and His name honored in all His servants, for He well knoweth how to turn evil into good.

Endeavor to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, of what sort soever they be ; for thyself also hast many failings which must be borne with by others.

If thou canst not make thyself such a one as thou wouldest, how canst thou expect to have another in all things to thy liking ?

We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we amend not our own faults.

3. We will have others severely corrected, and will not be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty of others displeaseth us, and yet we will not have our own desires denied us.

We will have others kept under by strict laws, but in no sort will we ourselves be restrained.

And thus it appeareth how seldom we weigh our neighbor in the same balance with ourselves.

If all men were perfect, what should we have to suffer from our neighbor for the sake of God?

4. But now God hath thus ordered it, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens: for no man is without fault; no man but hath his burden; no man is sufficient of himself; no man is wise enough of himself; but we ought to bear with one another, comfort one another, help, instruct, and admonish one another.

Occasions of adversity best discover how great virtue or strength each one hath.

For occasions do not make a man frail, but they show what he is.°

CHAPTER XVII

Of Life in a Religious Community

THOU must learn to break thine own will in many things if thou wilt have peace and concord with others.

It is no small matter to dwell in a religious community or monastery, to hold thy place there without

giving offence and to continue faithful even unto death.

Blessed is he that hath there lived well and ended happily.

If thou wilt stand firm and grow as thou oughtest, esteem thyself as a pilgrim and stranger upon earth.

Thou must be contented for Christ's sake to be esteemed as a fool in this world,^o if thou desire to lead the life of a monk.

2. Habit and tonsure^o profit little; but change of heart and perfect mortification of the passions make a true monk.

He that seeketh any thing else but God and the salvation of his soul, shall find nothing but tribulation and sorrows.

Neither can he remain long in peace, that laboreth not to be the least and subject to all.

3. Thou camest to serve, not to rule. Know that thou wast called to suffer and to labor, and not to be idle nor to spend thy time in talk.

Here therefore men are tried as gold in the furnace.

Here no man can stand, unless he humble himself with his whole heart for the love of God.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the Examples of the Holy Fathers

CONSIDER the lively examples of the holy Fathers in whom true perfection and religion shone, and thou shalt see how little it is, almost nothing, which we do now in these days.

Alas, what is our life, if we be compared to them !

The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labor and weariness, in watchings and fastings, in prayer and holy meditations, in many persecutions and reproaches.

2. Oh, how many and grievous tribulations suffered the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all the rest that endeavored to follow the steps of Christ ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them unto life eternal.

Oh, how strict and self-renouncing a life led those holy Fathers in the wilderness ! How long and grievous temptations suffered they ! How often were they assaulted by the enemy ! What frequent and fervent prayers offered they to God ! What rigorous abstinences

did they observe ! How great zeal and care had they of their spiritual advancement ! How strong a combat waged they for the overcoming of their lusts ! What pure and upright intentions kept they towards God !

In the day they labored, and in the night they attended to continual prayer ; although, even while they labored, they never ceased from mental prayer.

3. They spent all their time with profit ; every hour seemed but short for the service of God. And by reason of the great sweetness they felt in contemplation, they forgot the necessity of refreshment for the body.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honors, friends and kinsfolk ; they desired to have nothing which appertained to the world ; they scarce took the necessities of life ; they grudged even the necessary care of the body.

Therefore they were poor earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

Outwardly they were destitute, but inwardly they were refreshed with grace and divine consolation.

4. They were strangers to the world, but near and familiar friends to God.

They seemed to themselves as nothing, and to this present world despicable ; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They were grounded in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in love and patience; and therefore they grew daily in the Spirit and obtained great grace in God's sight.

They were given for an example to all religious persons; and they should more stimulate us to endeavor after spiritual advancement, than the number of the lukewarm should prevail to make us remiss.

5. Oh, how great was the fervor of all religious persons in the beginning!

How great was their devotion to prayer! What ambition to excel others in virtue, what exact discipline then flourished! How great reverence and obedience, under the rule of their superiors, observed they in all things!

Their footsteps yet remaining testify that they were indeed holy and perfect men, who, fighting thus valiantly, trod the world under their feet.

Now he is greatly accounted of who is not a transgressor, and who can with patience endure that which he hath received.

6. Oh, the lukewarmness and negligence of our times, that we so quickly decline from the ancient fervor and are come to that pass that very sloth and lukewarmness of spirit make our life tedious unto us.

Would to God the desire to grow in virtues did not wholly sleep in thee, who hast often seen so many examples of the devout !

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Exercises of a Good Religious

THE life of a good religious ought to excel in all virtues, that he may inwardly be such as outwardly he seemeth to men.

And rightly there ought to be much more within than is perceived without. For God beholdeth us, God whom we are bound most highly to reverence wheresoever we are and to walk in purity like angels in His sight.

Daily ought we to renew our purpose and stir ourselves to greater fervor, as though this were the first day of our conversion, and to say, —

Help me, my God, in this my good purpose, and in thy holy service ; and grant that I may now this day begin perfectly, for that which I have done hitherto is as nothing.

2. According to our purpose shall be the rate of

our spiritual progress ; and much diligence is necessary to him that will profit much.

And if he that firmly purposeth often faileth, what shall he do that seldom or but weakly resolveth ?

Yet in various ways it happeneth that we forsake our resolutions, and a slight omission of our spiritual exercises is not without loss to our souls.

The purpose of just men dependeth not upon their own wisdom, but upon God's grace, on which they always rely for whatsoever they take in hand.

For man proposeth, but God disposeth^o ; neither is the way of man in himself.

3. If an accustomed exercise be sometimes omitted, either for some act of piety or profit to our brother, it may easily be performed afterwards.

But if out of weariness or carelessness we lightly omit it, it is very blameworthy, and will be felt to be hurtful. Do the best we can, we shall still too easily fail in many things.

Yet must we always have some fixed purpose, and especially against those sins which do most of all hinder us.

We must diligently search into and set in order both our outward and inward things, because both are of importance to our progress in godliness.

4. If thou canst not be continually recollected, yet be so sometimes, at least twice a day, namely, in the morning and at night.

In the morning fix thy good purpose, and at night examine what thou hast done, how thou hast behaved thyself, in word, deed, and thought, for in these perhaps thou hast oftentimes offended both God and thy neighbor.

Gird up thy loins like a man against the vile assaults of the devil; bridle thy riotous appetite, and thou shalt be the better able to restrain all the unruly motions of the flesh.

Never be entirely idle; but either be reading or writing, praying or meditating, or doing something for the public good.

As for bodily exercises,^o they must be used with discretion, neither are they to be practised equally by all.

5. Those devotions which belong not to the community ought not to be done in public; for private devotions are practised most safely in secret.

Nevertheless thou must beware thou neglect not those which are common, being more ready for what is private. But having fully and faithfully accomplished all which thou art bound and enjoined to do, if thou

hast any spare time, betake thee to thyself as thy devotion calleth thee.

All cannot use one kind of spiritual exercise, but one is more useful for this person, another for that.

According to the seasonableness of times also, divers exercises are fitting; some suit better with us on working days, others on holy days.

In time of temptation we have need of some, and of others in time of peace and quiet.

Some suit us when we are sad, and others when we rejoice in the Lord.

6. About the time of the chief festivals good exercises are to be renewed and the prayers of the saints more fervently to be implored.

From festival to festival we should make resolutions as though we were then to depart out of this world and to hie us to the everlasting festival.

Therefore ought we carefully to prepare ourselves at holy times and to live more devoutly and to keep more exactly all things that we are to observe, as though we were shortly at God's hands to receive the reward of our labors.

7. But if that reward be deferred, let us reflect that we are not sufficiently prepared and unworthy yet of

so great glory which shall be revealed to us in due time ; and let us endeavor to prepare ourselves better for our departure.

Blessed is that servant, saith the evangelist St. Luke, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find watching ; amen, I say to you, He shall set him over all His possessions.

CHAPTER XX

Of the Love of Solitude and Silence

SEEK a convenient time for reflection, and meditate often upon God's loving kindness.

Meddle not with things too high for thee ; but read such things as may rather yield compunction to thy heart than occupation to thy head.

If thou wilt withdraw thyself from speaking vainly and from gadding idly, as also from hearkening after novelties and rumors, thou shalt find leisure enough for meditation on good things.

The greatest saints avoided the society of men when they could conveniently, and did rather choose to live to God in secret.

2. As often as I have been among men, said a philosopher,^o I have returned home less a man.

And this we find true when we talk long together. It is easier not to speak at all than not to speak too much.

It is easier for a man to keep retired at home than to be able sufficiently to watch over himself abroad.

He therefore that seeketh to attain to the more inward and spiritual things of religion, must with JESUS draw apart from the crowd.

No man doth safely appear abroad but he who can abide at home.

No man doth safely speak but he that is glad to hold his peace.

No man doth safely rule but he that is glad to be ruled.

No man doth safely rule but he that hath learned to obey gladly.

3. No man rejoiceth safely unless he hath within him the testimony of a good conscience.

Always the security of the saints was full of the fear of God.

Neither were they the less anxious and humble in themselves in proportion as they shone outwardly with grace and great virtues.

But the security of bad men ariseth from pride and presumption, and in the end it deceiveth them.

Although thou seem to be a good religious, or a devout solitary, yet never promise thyself security in this life.

4. Oftentimes those who have been in the greatest esteem and account amongst men have fallen into the greatest danger by overmuch self-confidence.

Wherefore, to many it is more profitable not to be altogether free from temptations, but to be often assaulted, lest they should feel too safe and so perhaps be puffed up with pride, or else should too freely give themselves to worldly comforts.

Oh, how good a conscience would he keep that would never seek after transitory joy, nor ever entangle himself with the world !

Oh, what great peace and quiet would he possess, that would cut off all vain anxiety and think only upon divine things and such as are profitable for his soul, and would place all his confidence in God !

5. No man is worthy of heavenly comfort unless he have diligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou desirest true contrition of heart, enter into thy secret chamber and shut out the tumults of the

world, as it is written, — Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.^o In thy cell thou shalt find what abroad thou shalt too often lose.

The cell, constantly dwelt in, groweth sweet; but, rarely occupied, it becometh loathsome.

If in the beginning of thy conversion thou art content to remain in it, and keep to it well, it will afterwards be to thee a dear friend, and a most pleasant comfort.

6. In silence and in stillness a religious soul advantageth itself and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scripture.

There it findeth rivers of tears wherein it may every night wash and cleanse itself, that it may be so much the more familiar with its Creator, by how much the farther off it liveth from all worldly disquiet.

To whomsoever therefore who withdraweth himself from his acquaintances and friends, God will draw near with His holy angels.

It is better for a man to live alone and to have regard to himself, than to neglect his soul and work miracles.

It is commendable in a religious seldom to go abroad, to be unwilling to see or to be seen.

7. Why art thou desirous to see that which it is

unlawful for thee to have? The world passeth away and the lust thereof.

The lusts of the flesh draw us to rove abroad; but, when the time is past, what carriest thou home with thee but a burdened conscience and a distracted heart?

A joyous going forth bringeth often a mournful return, and a merry evening maketh a sad morning.

So all carnal joy entereth gently, but in the end it stingeth to remorse and death.

What canst thou see elsewhere which thou canst not see here? Behold the heaven and the earth and all the elements; for of these are all things created.

8. What canst thou see anywhere that can long continue under the sun?

Thou thinkest perchance to satisfy thyself, but thou canst never attain to it.

Couldst thou see all things present before thine eyes, what were it but a vain sight?

Lift up thine eyes to God in the highest and pray him to pardon thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to vain people; but be thou intent upon those things which God hath commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call unto thee JESUS, thy Beloved.

Stay with Him in thy cell ; for thou shalt not find so great peace anywhere else.

If thou hadst not gone abroad and hearkened to idle rumors, thou wouldst the better have preserved a happy peace of mind. But since thou delightest sometimes to hear news, it is but fit thou suffer for it some disquietude of heart.

CHAPTER XXI

Of Compunction of Heart

IF thou wilt make any progress in godliness, keep thyself in the fear of God and seek not too much liberty. Restrain all thy senses under discipline and give not thyself over to foolish mirth.

Give thyself to compunction of heart and thou shalt find devotion.

Compunction layeth open much good, which dissoluteness is wont quickly to destroy.

It is a wonder that any man can ever perfectly rejoice in this life if he duly consider and thoroughly weigh his state of banishment and the many perils wherewith his soul is environed.

2. Through levity of heart and small care for our failings, we feel not the real sorrows of our souls, and so oftentimes we vainly laugh when we have just cause to weep.

There is no true liberty nor right joy but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is he who can cast off all distracting impediments and bring himself to the one purpose of holy compunction.

Happy is he who can abandon all that may defile or burden his conscience.

Strive manfully ; habit is overcome by habit.

If thou canst let others alone, they likewise will let thee alone.

3. Busy not thyself in the affairs of others, neither do thou entangle thyself with the cares of thy superiors.

Ever have an eye to thyself first, admonish thyself rather than thy friends.

If thou hast not the favor of men, be not grieved at it ; but let thy concern be that thou dost not behave thyself so warily and circumspectly as it becometh the servant of God, and a devout religious.°

It is better oftentimes and safer that a man should not have many consolations in this life, especially such as are according to the flesh.

But that we have not divine consolations at all or do very seldom taste them, the fault is ours, because we seek not after compunction of heart nor do altogether forsake the vain and outward comforts of this world.

4. Know that thou art unworthy of divine consolation and that thou hast rather deserved much tribulation.

When a man hath perfect compunction, then is the whole world burdensome and bitter unto him.

A good man findeth always sufficient cause for mourning and weeping.

For whether he consider his own or his neighbor's estate, he knoweth that none liveth here without tribulation.

And the more closely a man looketh into himself, so much the more he sorroweth.

Our sins and vices, wherein we lie so enwrapt that we can seldom apply ourselves to heavenly contemplations, do minister unto us matter of just sorrow and inward compunction.

5. Didst thou oftener think of death than of a long life, thou wouldst doubtless be more zealous to amend.

If also thou didst but consider within thyself the infernal pains in the other world, I believe thou wouldst

willingly undergo any labor or sorrow here, and not be afraid of the greatest austerity.

But because these things enter not the heart and we still love those things only that delight us, therefore it is we remain cold and very sluggish.

6. It is often our poverty of spirit which maketh our miserable body so easily to complain.

Pray therefore unto the Lord with all humility that He will vouchsafe to give thee the spirit of compunction. And say with the Prophet,^o — Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me to drink tears in full measure.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Consideration of Human Misery

MISERABLE thou art, wheresoever thou be, or whithersoever thou turnest, unless thou turn thyself unto God.

Why art thou troubled when things succeed not as thou wouldst or desirest? For who is he that hath all things according to his mind? Neither I nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is none in this world, even though he be king or pope, without some tribulation or perplexity.

Who, then, hath the happiest lot? Even he who is able to suffer something for God.

2. Many weak and infirm persons say, — Behold! what a happy life such a one leads; how wealthy, how great he is, in what power and dignity!

But lift up thine eyes to the riches of heaven, and thou shalt see that all the goods of this life are nothing. They are very uncertain, and rather burdensome than otherwise, because they are never possessed without anxiety and fear.

Man's happiness consisteth not in having abundance of temporal goods, but a moderate portion is sufficient for him.

Truly it is misery to live upon the earth.

The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more bitter doth this present life become to him, because he seeth more clearly and perceiveth more sensibly the defects of human corruption.

For to eat and to drink, to sleep and to watch, to labor and to rest, and to be subject to other necessities of nature, is doubtless a great misery and affliction to a religious man who would gladly be released and freed from all sin.

3. For the inward man is much weighed down in this world by the needs of the body.

Therefore the Prophet prayeth with great devotion to be enabled to be free from them, saying,—From my necessities deliver me, O Lord.

But woe be to them that know not their own misery, and a greater woe to them that love this miserable and corruptible life !

For some there be who so much dote upon it, that although by labor or by begging they can scarce get mere necessities, yet if they might be able to live here always, they would care nothing at all for the kingdom of God.

4. Oh, how senseless are these men and unbelieving in heart who lie so deeply sunk in the earth, that they can relish nothing but carnal things !

But miserable as they are, they shall in the end feel to their cost how vile and how worthless that was which they loved.

But the saints of God and all the devout friends of Christ regarded not those things which pleased the flesh, nor those which were in repute in this life, but panted after everlasting riches with their whole hope and earnest effort.

Their whole desire was carried upward to things

durable and invisible, that the desire of things visible might not draw them to things below.

5. O my brother, cast not away thy confidence of making progress in godliness; there is yet time, the hour is not yet past.

Why wilt thou defer thy good purpose from day to day? Arise and begin in this very instant, and say, — Now is the time to do, now is the time to fight, now is the fit time to amend my life.

When thou art ill at ease and much troubled, then is the time for earning merit.

Thou must pass through fire and water before thou come to refreshment.

Unless thou doest violence to thyself, thou shalt never get the victory over sin.

So long as we carry about us this frail body of ours, we can never be without sin nor live without weariness and pain.

We would gladly have rest from all misery, but seeing that by sin we have lost our innocence,^o we have lost also the true felicity.

Therefore it becometh us to have patience and to wait for the mercy of God, till this tyranny be past and mortality be swallowed up in life.

6. Oh, how great is human frailty which is always prone to evil !

To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou committest the very same which thou hast confessed.

Now, thou dost resolve to look well unto thy ways, and within an hour thou behavest as though thou hadst never resolved at all.

Good cause have we therefore to humble ourselves and never to have any great conceit of ourselves, since we are so frail and so inconstant.

That also may quickly be lost by our own negligence which by the grace of God and with much labor we have scarce at length obtained.

7. What will become of us in the end, who begin so early to wax lukewarm ?

Woe unto us, if we choose to rest, as if all were now peace and safety, when as yet there appeareth no sign of true holiness in our life.

We have much need like young novices to be newly instructed again to good life, if haply there be some hope of future amendment and greater spiritual progress.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of Meditation on Death

VERY quickly there will be an end of thee here ;
see therefore to thy state.

To-day man is ; to-morrow he is gone.

And when he is out of sight, quickly also is he out of mind.

Oh, the stupidity and hardness of man's heart, which thinketh only upon the present and doth not rather regard what is to come !

Thou oughtest so to order thyself in all thy thoughts and actions as if to-day thou wert to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not greatly fear death.

It were better to avoid sin than to escape death.

If to-day thou art not prepared, how wilt thou be so to-morrow !

To-morrow is uncertain, and how knowest thou that thou shalt live till to-morrow !

2. What availeth it to live long when there is so small amendment in us ?

Alas, length of days doth not always better us, but often rather increaseth our sins.

Oh, that we had spent but one day in this world thoroughly well !

Many there are who reckon years of conversion ; and yet full slender oftentimes is the fruit of amendment.

If to die be accounted dreadful, to live long may perhaps prove more dangerous.

Happy is he that always hath the hour of his death before his eyes, and daily prepareth himself to die.

If at any time thou hast seen a man die, reflect that thou must also pass the same way.

3. When it is morning, think that thou mayest die before night ; and when evening cometh, dare not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be thou therefore always in readiness, and so lead thy life that death may never take thee unprepared.

Many die suddenly and when they look not for it ; for the Son of Man will come in an hour when we think not.

When that last hour shall come, thou wilt begin to have a far different opinion of thy whole life that is past, and be exceeding sorry that thou hast been so careless and remiss.

4. Oh, how wise and happy is he that now laboreth to be such a one in his life as he will desire to be found at the hour of death!

A perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to go forward in all virtue, a love of discipline, a laborious repentance, a ready obedience, a denying of ourselves and an endurance of any affliction whatsoever for the love of Christ, will give us great confidence that we shall die happily.

Whilst thou art in health thou mayest do much good; but when thou art sick, I see not what thou wilt be able to do.

Few are improved by sickness; so also they who wander much abroad, seldom become holy.

5. Trust not to friends and kindred, neither do thou put off the care of thy soul's welfare till hereafter; for men will forget thee sooner than thou art aware of.

It is better to look to it betime and to send some good before thee, than to trust to the help of others after thy death.^o

If thou be not careful for thyself now, who will be careful for thee hereafter?

Time now is very precious: now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation.

But alas ! that thou shouldst spend time so idly here, in which thou mightest purchase life eternal.

The time will come when thou shalt desire one day or hour to amend in, and I know not that it will be granted thee.

6. O beloved, from how great danger mightest thou deliver thyself, from how great fear free thyself, if thou wouldst be ever fearful and mindful of death !

Labor now so to live, that at the hour of death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear.

Learn now to die to the world, that thou mayest then begin to live with Christ.

Learn now to condemn all things, that thou mayest then freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by penance that thou mayest then have assured confidence.

7. Ah, fool ! Why dost thou think to live long, when thou canst not promise to thyself one day ?

How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away !

How often dost thou hear these reports : Such a man is slain, another man is drowned, a third has broken his neck with a fall from some high place ; this man died eating, and that man playing ! One perished by

fire, another by the sword, another of the plague, another by the hands of robbers. Thus death is the end of all, and man's life suddenly passeth away like a shadow.

8. Who shall remember thee when thou art dead, and who shall pray for thee?

Do now, even now, my beloved, whatsoever thou art able to do; for thou knowest not when thou shalt die nor what shall befall thee after thy death.

Now, whilst thou hast time, heap unto thyself everlasting riches.

Think on nothing but the salvation of thy soul, care for nothing but the things of God.

Make now friends to thyself by honoring the saints of God, and imitating their actions, that when thou failest, they may receive thee into everlasting dwellings.

9. Keep thyself as a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, who hath nothing to do with the affairs of this world.

Keep thy heart free and lifted up to God, because thou hast here no lasting city.

Send thither thy daily prayers and sighs together with thy tears, that after death thy spirit may be found worthy to pass in felicity to the Lord. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XXIV

Of Judgment and the Punishment of Sinners

IN all things look to the end, and see how thou wilt be able to stand before that severe Judge from whom nothing is hid, who taketh no bribes, nor admitteth any excuses, but will judge a just judgment.

O wretched and foolish sinner, who sometimes fearest the countenance of an angry man, what answer wilt thou make to God who knoweth all thy wickedness !

Why dost thou not provide for thyself against that great day of judgment, when no man can excuse or answer for another; but every one shall have enough to answer for himself !

Now may thy pains profit, thy tears be accepted, thy groans be heard ; thy grief may bring thee peace and purge thy soul.

2. The patient man hath a great and wholesome purgatory, who, though he receive injuries, yet grieveth more for the malice of another than for his own suffering ; who prayeth willingly for his adversaries, and from his heart forgiveth their offences. He delayeth

not to ask forgiveness of whomsoever he hath offended ; he is sooner moved to compassion than to anger ; he often offereth violence to himself, and laboreth to bring his body wholly into subjection to the spirit.

It is better to purge out our sins and cut off our vices here, than to keep them to be punished hereafter.

Verily we deceive ourselves through an inordinate love of the flesh.

3. What is there that the fire of hell shall feed upon but thy sins ?

The more thou sparest thyself now and followest the flesh, the more severe hereafter shall be thy punishment ; thou storest up greater fuel for that flame.

In what things a man hath sinned, in the same shall he be the more grievously punished.

There shall the slothful be pricked forward with burning goads, and the gluttons be tormented with extreme hunger and thirst.

There shall the luxurious and lovers of pleasure be plunged into burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and the envious, like rabid dogs, shall howl for grief.

4. There is no sin but shall have its own proper torment.

There the proud shall be filled with all confusion ; the covetous shall be pinched with miserable penury.

One hour of pain there shall be more bitter than a thousand years of the sharpest penance here !

There is no quiet, no comfort for the damned ; yet here we have some intermission of our labors and enjoy the comfort of our friends.

Be now solicitous and sorrowful because of thy sins, that at the day of judgment thou mayest be secure with the blessed.

For then shall the righteous with great constancy stand against such as have vexed and oppressed them.

Then shall he stand to judge them, who doth now humbly submit himself to the censures of men.

Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence, but the proud man shall be compassed with fear on every side.

5. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world who had learned to be a fool and despised for Christ's sake.

Then shall every affliction patiently undergone delight us, when the mouth of all iniquity shall be stopped.

Then shall all the devout rejoice, and all the profane mourn.

Then shall the mortified flesh more rejoice than that which hath been pampered with all pleasures.

Then shall the mean garment shine gloriously, and the precious robe seem vile and contemptible.

Then the poor cottage shall be more commended than the gilded palace.

Then shall constant patience more avail us than all earthly power.

Then simple obedience shall be exalted above all worldly wisdom.

6. Then shall a good and clear conscience more rejoice a man than all the learning of philosophy.

Then shall the contempt of riches weigh more than all the worldling's treasure.

Then shalt thou be more comforted that thou hast prayed devoutly than that thou hast fared daintily.

Then shalt thou be more glad that thou hast kept silence than that thou hast spoken much.

Then shall good works avail more than many goodly words.

Then a strict life and severe repentance shall be more pleasing than all earthly delights.

Accustom thyself now to suffer a little, that thou mayest then be delivered from more grievous pains.

Prove first here what thou canst endure hereafter.

If now thou canst endure so little, how wilt thou then be able to support eternal torments?

If now a little suffering maketh thee so impatient, what will hell fire do hereafter?

Assure thyself thou canst not have two joys; it is impossible to take thy pleasure here in this world, and after that to reign with Christ.

7. Suppose that thou hadst up to this day lived always in honors and delights, what would it all avail thee if thou wert doomed to die at this instant?

All therefore is vanity, except to love God and serve Him only.

For he that loveth God with all his heart is neither afraid of death, nor of punishment, nor of judgment, nor of hell; for perfect love giveth secure access to God.

But he that taketh delight in sin, what marvel is it if he be afraid both of death and judgment?

Yet it is good, although love be not yet of force to withhold thee from sin, that at least the fear of hell should restrain thee.

But he that layeth aside the fear of God can never continue long in good estate, but falleth quickly into the snares of the devil.

CHAPTER XXV

Of the Zealous Amendment of our Whole Life

BE watchful and diligent in the service of God, and often bethink thyself wherefore thou camest hither and why thou hast left the world.^o Was it not that thou mightest live to God, and become a spiritual man?

Be fervent then in going forward, for shortly thou shalt receive the reward of thy labors; there shall not be then any more fear or sorrow within thy borders.

Labor but a little now and thou shalt find great rest, yea, perpetual joy.

If thou continuest faithful and fervent in thy work, no doubt but that God will be faithful and liberal in rewarding thee.

Thou oughtest to have a good hope of getting the victory; but thou must not be secure, lest thou wax either negligent or proud.

2. When one that was in anxiety of mind, often wavering between fear and hope, did once, being oppressed with grief, humbly prostrate himself in a church before the altar in prayer, and said within him-

self, O if I knew that I should yet persevere, — he presently heard within him an answer from God, which said, — If thou didst know it, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst do then, and thou shalt be secure.

And being herewith comforted and strengthened, he committed himself wholly to the will of God, and his anxious wavering ceased.^o

Neither had he the mind to search curiously any further to know what should befall him, but rather labored to understand what was the perfect and acceptable will of God for the beginning and accomplishing of every good work.

3. Trust in the Lord, and do good, saith the Prophet ; and inhabit the land, and thou shalt be fed with the riches thereof.

One thing there is that draweth many back from spiritual progress, and the diligent amendment of their lives — the fear of the difficulty, or the labor of the combat.

But they especially exceed others in all virtue, who make the greatest effort to overcome those things which are most grievous and contrary to them.

For there a man improveth most and obtaineth

greatest grace, where he most overcometh himself and mortifieth himself in spirit.

4. But all men have not the same passions to overcome and mortify.

Yet he that is zealous and diligent, though he have more passions, shall profit more than another that is of a more temperate disposition, but less fervent in the pursuit of virtue.

Two things especially further our amendment, to wit: To withdraw ourselves violently from those vices to which our nature is most inclined, and to labor earnestly for that good which we most lack.

Be careful also to avoid with great diligence those things in thyself which commonly displease thee in others.

5. Gather some profit to thy soul wheresoever thou art, so that if thou seest or hearest of any good examples, thou stir up thyself to the imitation thereof.

But if thou observe anything worthy of reproof, beware thou do not the same; and if at any time thou hast done it, labor quickly to amend thyself.

As thine eye observeth others, so art thou also noted by others.

Oh, how sweet and pleasant a thing it is to see

brethren fervent and devout, well-mannered and well-disciplined !

And on the contrary, how sad and grievous a thing it is to see them live in a dissolute and disordered way, not applying themselves to that for which they are called !

How hurtful a thing is it when they neglect the good purposes of their vocation, and busy themselves in that which is not committed to their care !

6. Be mindful of the profession which thou hast made, and have always before the eyes of thy soul the remembrance of thy Saviour crucified.

Thou hast good cause to be ashamed in looking upon the life of JESUS Christ, seeing thou hast not as yet endeavored to conform thyself more unto Him, though thou hast been a long time in the way of God.

A religious that exerciseth himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord, shall there abundantly find whatsoever is necessary and profitable for him ; neither shall he need to seek any better model than JESUS.

Oh, if JESUS crucified would come into our hearts, how quickly and fully should we be taught !

7. A fervent religious taketh and beareth well all that is commanded him.

But he that is negligent and lukewarm hath tribulation upon tribulation, and on all sides is afflicted ; for he is void of inward consolation and is forbidden to seek outward comforts.

A religious that liveth not according to discipline lieth open to great ruin.

He that seeketh liberty and ease shall ever live in disquiet, for one thing or other will displease him.

How do so many other religious, who live under strict monastic discipline ?

They seldom go abroad ; they live in close retirement ; their habit is coarse ; they labor much ; they speak little ; they keep long vigils ; they rise early ; they spend much time in prayer ; they read often, and keep themselves in all manner of discipline.

Think of the Carthusians and the Cistercians,^o and the monks and nuns of divers orders ; how every night they rise to sing psalms to the Lord.

It would therefore be a shame for thee to be sluggish in so holy a work when so many religious begin joyously to give praise to God.

8. Oh, that we had nothing else to do but always with our mouth and whole heart to praise our Lord God !

Oh, that thou mightest never have need to eat or drink or sleep, but mightest always praise God and only employ thyself in spiritual exercises! Thou shouldest then be much more happy than now thou art, when for so many necessities thou art constrained to serve thy body!

Would to God there were not these necessities, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul, which, alas, we taste too seldom!

9. When a man cometh to that estate that he seeketh not his comfort from any creature, then doth he begin perfectly to relish God. Then shall he be contented with whatsoever doth befall him.

Then shall he neither rejoice in having much nor be sorrowful for having little, but entirely and confidently commit himself to God who shall be unto him all in all, to whom nothing doth perish nor die, but all things do live unto Him, and serve Him at His command without delay.

10. Remember always thine end, and that time lost never returns. Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtue.

If thou begin to wax lukewarm, it will begin to be evil with thee.

But if thou give thyself to fervor of spirit thou shalt find much peace, and feel less labor, by reason of the assistance of God's grace and the love of virtue.

The fervent and diligent man is prepared for all things.

It is harder work to resist vices and passions, than to toil in bodily labors.

He that avoideth not small faults, by little and little falleth into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening if thou have spent the day profitably.

Be watchful over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself, and whatever becometh of others, neglect not thyself.

The more violence thou usest against thyself, the greater shall be thy profiting. *Amen.*

THE SECOND BOOK

ADMONITIONS CONCERNING THE INTERIOR LIFE

CHAPTER I

Of the Interior Life

THE kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord. Turn thee with thy whole heart unto the Lord and forsake this wretched world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to despise outward things and to give thyself to things interior, and thou shalt perceive the kingdom of God to be come in thee.

For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is not given to the unholy.

Christ will come unto thee and show thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for Him a worthy mansion within thee.

All His glory and beauty is from within, and there He delighteth Himself.

The inward man He often visiteth ; and hath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful.

2. O faithful soul, make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom, that He may vouchsafe to come unto thee and to dwell within thee.

For thus saith He, — If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. ✓

Give therefore admittance unto Christ and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ thou art rich and hast enough. He will be thy faithful and provident helper in all things, so that thou shalt not need to trust in men.

For men soon change and quickly fail, but Christ remaineth forever and standeth by us firmly unto the end.

3. There is no great trust to be put in a frail and mortal man, even though he be useful and dear unto us ; neither ought we to be much grieved, if sometimes he cross and contradict us.

They that to-day take thy part, to-morrow may be against thee ; and often do men turn like the wind.

Put all thy trust in God, let Him be thy fear and

thy love ; He shall answer for thee and will do all things well and as is best for thee.

Thou hast not here a lasting city, and wheresoever thou mayest be thou art a stranger and pilgrim ; neither shalt thou ever have rest unless thou be inwardly united to Christ.

4. Why dost thou here gaze about, since this is not the place of thy rest ? In heaven ought to be thy home, and all earthly things are to be looked upon as it were by the way.

All things pass away, and thou together with them.

Beware thou cleave not unto them, lest thou be ensnared by them and so perish. Let thy thoughts be on the Most High, and thy prayers for mercy directed unto Christ without ceasing.

If thou canst not contemplate high and heavenly things, rest thyself in the passion of Christ and dwell willingly in His sacred wounds.

For if thou fly devoutly unto the wounds and precious stigmas^o of JESUS, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation ; neither wilt thou much care for the slights of men and wilt easily bear the words of those that reproach thee.

5. Christ was also in the world, despised of men, and in His greatest necessity forsaken by His acquaintances and friends in the midst of reproaches.

Christ was willing to suffer and be despised, and darest thou complain of any thing?

Christ had adversaries and backbiters, and dost thou wish to have all men thy friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience attain her crown if no adversity befall thee?

If thou art willing to suffer no contradiction, how wilt thou be the friend of Christ?

Suffer with Christ and for Christ if thou desire to reign with Christ.

6. If thou hadst but once perfectly entered into the inner life of JESUS, and tasted a little of His ardent love, thou wouldst not regard thine own convenience or inconvenience, but rather wouldst rejoice in reproaches if they should be cast upon thee, for the love of JESUS maketh a man to despise himself.

A lover of JESUS and of the truth, a true inward Christian and one free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God and lift himself above himself in spirit, and rest in full enjoyment.

7. He that judgeth of all things as they are, and

not as they are said or esteemed to be, is truly wise and taught rather of God than of men.

He that knoweth how to live inwardly and to make small reckoning of things without, neither requireth places, nor awaiteth times to perform his religious exercises.

A spiritual man quickly recollecteth himself, because he never giveth himself wholly to outward things.

He is not hindered by outward labor or business, which may be necessary for the time ; but as things fall out, so he suiteth himself to them.

He that is well ordered and disposed within himself, careth not for the strange and perverse behavior of men.

A man is hindered and distracted in proportion as he draweth outward things unto himself.

8. If it were well with thee and thou wert thoroughly purified from sin, all things would fall out to thee for good and to thy progress.

But many things displease and often trouble thee, because thou art not yet perfectly dead unto thyself nor separated from all earthly things.

Nothing so defileth and entangleth the heart of man as the impure love of things created.

If thou refuse outward comfort, thou wilt be able to

contemplate the things of Heaven and often to receive internal joy.

CHAPTER II

Of Humble Submission

REGARD not much who is for thee or who against thee, but give all thy thought and care to this, that God be with thee in everything thou doest.

Have a good conscience and God will well defend thee.

For whom God will help, no malice of man shall be able to hurt.

If thou canst be silent and suffer, without doubt thou shalt see that the Lord will help thee.

He knoweth the time and the manner to deliver thee, and therefore thou oughtest to resign thyself unto Him.

It belongeth to God to help and to deliver from all confusion.

It is often very profitable, to keep us more humble, that others know and rebuke our faults.

2. When a man humbleth himself for his failings, he

easily pacifieth others and quickly satisfieth those that are offended with him.

God protecteth the humble and delivereth him ; the humble He loveth and comforteth ; unto the humble man He inclineth Himself ; unto the humble He giveth great grace ; and after his humiliation He raiseth him to glory.

Unto the humble He revealeth His secrets, and sweetly draweth and inviteth him unto Himself.

The humble man, though he suffer reproaches, hath yet much peace, because he resteth on God and not on the world.

Do not think that thou hast made any progress unless thou consider thyself inferior to all.

CHAPTER III

Of a Good and Peaceable Man

FIRST keep thyself in peace and then shalt thou be able to make peace among others.

A peaceable man doth more good than he that is very learned.

A passionate man^o draweth even good into evil and easily believeth the worst.

A good and peaceable man turneth all things to good.

He that is in peace is not suspicious of any man. But he that is discontented and troubled is tossed with divers suspicions; he is neither at peace himself, nor suffereth others to be at peace.

He often speaketh that which he ought not to speak, and leaveth undone that which it were more expedient for him to do.

He considereth what others are bound to do, and neglecteth that which he is bound to do himself.

First therefore have a careful zeal over thyself, and then thou mayest justly show thyself zealous for thy neighbor's good.

2. Thou knowest well how to excuse and color thine own deeds, but thou art not willing to receive the excuses of others.

It were more just that thou shouldst accuse thyself and excuse thy brother.

If thou wilt thyself be borne with, bear also with another.

Behold, how far off thou art yet from true charity and humility, which knoweth not how to be angry, or to be moved with indignation against any but one's self.

It is no great matter to associate with the good and gentle, for this is naturally pleasing to all ; every one willingly enjoyeth peace and loveth those best that agree with him.

But to be able to live peaceably with hard and perverse persons or with the disorderly or with such as go contrary to us, is a great grace and a most commendable and manly thing.

3. Some there are that keep themselves in peace and are at peace also with others.

And there are some that neither are in peace themselves nor suffer others to be in peace ; they are troublesome to others, but always more troublesome to themselves.

And others there are that keep themselves in peace and study to bring back others unto peace.

Nevertheless, our whole peace in this miserable life consisteth rather in humble endurance than in not suffering things that are contrary to us.

He that knoweth best how to suffer will best keep himself in peace. That man is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ and an heir of heaven.

CHAPTER IV

Of a Pure Mind and a Simple Intention

BY two wings a man is lifted up from things earthly, — namely, by Simplicity and Purity.

Simplicity ought to be in our intentions, purity in our affections. Simplicity doth tend towards God ; purity doth apprehend and taste Him.

No good action will hinder thee if thou be in thy heart free from inordinate affection.

If thou intend and seek nothing else but the will of God and the good of thy neighbor, thou shalt enjoy complete inward liberty.

If thy heart were sincere and upright every creature would be unto thee a living mirror and a book of holy doctrine.

There is no creature so small and abject that it representeth not the goodness of God.

2. If thou wert inwardly good and pure thou wouldst be able to see and understand all things well without impediment.

A pure heart penetrateth heaven and hell.

Such as every one is inwardly, so he judgeth outwardly.

If there be joy in the world, surely the man of pure heart possesseth it.

And if there be anywhere tribulation and affliction, an evil conscience best knoweth it.

As iron put into the fire loseth its rust and becometh all aglow, so he that wholly turneth himself unto God putteth off all slothfulness and is transformed into a new man.

3. When a man beginneth to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a little labor and willingly receiveth comfort from outward things.

But when he once beginneth to overcome himself perfectly and to walk manfully in the way of God, he esteemeth those things to be light which before seemed grievous unto him.

CHAPTER V

Of the Consideration of One's Self

WE cannot trust much to ourselves because grace oftentimes is wanting to us and understanding also.

There is but little light in us, and that which we have we quickly lose by our negligence.

Oftentimes too we do not perceive how great is our own inward blindness.

We often do a bad act and make a worse excuse.

We are sometimes moved with passion, and we think it to be zeal.

We reprehend small things in others and pass over greater matters in ourselves.

We quickly enough feel and weigh what we suffer at the hands of others, but we mind not what others suffer from us.

He that well and rightly considereth his own works will find little cause to judge hardly of another.

2. He who is a Christian at heart preferreth the care of himself before all other cares; and he that diligently attendeth unto himself, can easily keep silence concerning others.

Thou wilt never be at heart religious unless thou pass over other men's affairs in silence and look especially to thyself.

If thou attend wholly unto God and thyself, thou wilt be but little moved with whatsoever thou seest abroad.

Where art thou when thou art not with thyself? And when thou hast run over all things, what hast thou then profited if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou desirest peace of mind and true unity of purpose, thou must always put other things behind thee and look only upon thyself.

3. Thou shalt profit much if thou keep thyself free from all temporal care.

Thou shalt greatly lose if thou take thought for any temporal thing.

Let nothing be great unto thee, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable, but only God Himself or that which is of God.

Esteem all comfort vain which thou receivest from any creature.

A soul that loveth God despiseth all things that are less than God.

God alone is everlasting and of infinite greatness, filling all creatures; the comfort of the soul and the true joy of the heart.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Joy of a Good Conscience

THE glory of a good man is the testimony of a good conscience.

Have a good conscience and thou shalt ever have joy.

A good conscience is able to bear very much and is very cheerful in adversities.

An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet.

Sweetly shalt thou rest if thy heart reproach thee not.

Never rejoice but when thou hast done well.

Sinners never feel true joy nor interior peace, because There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord.

And if they should say, — We are in peace, no evil shall fall upon us, and who shall dare to hurt us? — believe them not ; for upon a sudden will arise the wrath of God, and their deeds shall be brought to nought and their thoughts shall perish.

2. To glory in tribulation is no hard thing for him that loveth ; for so to glory is to glory in the cross of the Lord.

That glory is short which is given by men and received from men.

Sorrow always accompanieth the glory of the world.

The glory of the good is in their consciences and not in the tongues of men. The gladness of the just is of God and in God, and their joy is of the truth.

He that desireth true and everlasting glory careth not for that which is temporal.

And he that seeketh temporal glory or despiseth it not from his soul, showeth himself to have but little love for the glory of heaven.

He enjoyeth great tranquillity of heart that careth neither for the praise nor dispraise of men.

3. He will easily be content and at peace whose conscience is pure.

Thou art not the more holy for being praised, nor the worse for being dispraised.

What thou art, that thou art; neither by words canst thou be made greater than what thou art in the sight of God.

If thou consider what thou art in thyself, thou wilt not care what men say of thee.

Man seeth the countenance, but God looketh into

the heart ; man considereth the deeds, but God weigheth the intentions.

To be always doing good and to hold one's self in slight esteem, is the sign of a humble soul.

To be unwilling to have any created being for our comforter, is a sign of great purity and inward confidence.

4. He that seeketh no testimony on his behalf from without doth show that he hath wholly committed himself unto God.

For not he that commendeth himself is approved, saith St. Paul, but he whom God commendeth.

To walk in the heart with God and not to be held in bondage by any outward affection, is the state of a spiritual man.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Love of Jesus above All Things

BLESSED is he that understandeth what it is to love JESUS and to despise himself for JESUS' sake.

Thou oughtest to leave what thou lovest for the sake of this Beloved ; for JESUS will be loved alone above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconsistent ; the love of JESUS is faithful and enduring.

He that cleaveth unto creatures shall fall with their falling ; he that embraceth JESUS shall stand firmly forever.

Love Him and keep Him for thy friend, who, when all go away, will not forsake thee nor suffer thee to perish in the end.

Sometime or other thou must be separated from all, whether thou wilt or no.

2. Keep close to JESUS both in life and in death and commit thyself unto His faithfulness, who, when all fail, can alone help thee.

Thy Beloved is of such a nature that He will admit of no rival, but will have thy heart alone and sit on His own throne as king.

If thou couldst empty thyself perfectly of all created things, JESUS would willingly dwell with thee.

Whatsoever trust thou reposest in men, out of JESUS, is little better than lost.

Trust not nor lean upon a reed shaken by the wind ; for that all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall wither away as the flower of the field.

3. Thou wilt soon be deceived if thou only look to the outward appearance of men.

For if thou seekest thy comfort and thy profit in others thou shalt often feel loss.

If thou seekest JESUS in all things thou shalt surely find JESUS.

But if thou seekest thyself thou shalt indeed find thyself, but to thine own destruction.

For if a man do not seek JESUS he is more hurtful to himself than the whole world and all his enemies could be.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Familiar Friendship with Jesus

WHEN JESUS is present, all is well and nothing seemeth difficult; but when JESUS is absent, every thing is hard.

When JESUS speaketh not inwardly to us, all other comfort is nothing worth; but if JESUS speak but one word, we feel great consolation.

Did not Mary rise immediately from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, — The Master is come, and calleth for thee?

Happy hour, when JESUS calleth from tears to joy of spirit.

How dry and hard art thou without JESUS ! How foolish and vain, if thou desire anything but JESUS !

Is not this a greater loss than if thou shouldst lose the whole world ?

2. What can the world profit thee without JESUS ?

To be without JESUS is a grievous hell ; to be with JESUS, a sweet paradise.

If JESUS be with thee no enemy shall be able to hurt thee.

He that findeth JESUS findeth a good treasure, yea, a good above all good.

And he that loseth JESUS loseth overmuch, yea, more than the whole world !

Most poor is he who liveth without JESUS ; and he is most rich who is dear to JESUS.

3. It asketh great skill to know how to hold converse with JESUS, and to know how to keep JESUS is great wisdom.

Be thou humble and peaceable, and JESUS will be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and JESUS will stay with thee.

Thou mayest soon drive away JESUS and lose His favor, if thou wilt turn aside to outward things.

And if thou shouldst drive Him from thee and lose

Him, unto whom wilt thou flee and whom wilt thou then seek for thy friend?

Without a friend thou canst not well live; and if JESUS be not above all friends to thee, thou shalt be indeed sad and desolate.

Therefore thou doest not wisely if thou trust or rejoice in any other.

It is preferable to have all the world against thee, rather than to have JESUS offended with thee.

Amongst all that be dear unto thee, let JESUS alone be specially beloved.

4. Love all for JESUS, but JESUS for Himself.

JESUS Christ alone is specially to be loved; and He alone is found good and faithful above all friends.

For Him and in Him let friends as well as foes be dear unto thee; and all these are to be prayed for that He would make them all to know and to love Him.

Never desire to be specially commended or beloved, for that appertaineth only unto God who hath none like unto Himself.

Neither do thou desire that the heart of any should be set on thee, nor do thou set thy heart on the love of any; but let JESUS be in thee, and in every good man.

5. Be pure and free within and entangle not thy heart with any creature.

Thou oughtest to be naked and open before God, ever carrying thy heart pure towards Him, if thou wouldst be free to consider and see how sweet the Lord is.

And truly, unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace, thou shalt never attain to that happiness of forsaking and taking leave of all in order that thou mayest be united to Him alone.

For when the grace of God cometh to a man, then he is made able for all things; but when it goeth away, then is he poor and weak, and abandoned to affliction.

In this case thou oughtest not to be cast down nor to despair, but to resign thyself calmly to the will of God, and to endure whatever comes upon thee for the glory of JESUS Christ; for after winter followeth summer, after night the day returneth, and after a tempest cometh a great calm.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Lack of All Comfort

IT is no hard matter to despise human comfort when we have that which is divine.

But it is much, and very much, to be able to lack both human and divine comfort, and for God's honor to be willing cheerfully to endure desolation of heart, to seek one's self in nothing, and to regard not one's own merit.

What great matter is it if, at the coming of grace, thou be cheerful and devout? This hour is wished for by all men.

He rideth easily enough whom the grace of God carrieth.

And what marvel if he feel not his burden, who is borne up by the Almighty and led by the Sovereign Guide?

2. We are always willing to have something for our comfort, and a man doth not without difficulty strip himself of self.

The holy martyr Lawrence,^o with his priest, over-

came the world, because whatsoever seemed delightful in the world he despised ; and for the love of Christ he patiently suffered God's chief priest Sixtus, whom he most dearly loved, to be taken away from him.

He therefore overcame the love of man by the love of the Creator, and he chose what pleased God rather than human comfort.

So also do thou learn to part even with a near and dear friend for the love of God.

Nor do thou think it hard when thou art deserted by a friend, knowing that we all at last must be separated one from another.

3. A man must strive long and mightily within himself before he can learn fully to master himself and to draw his whole heart unto God.

When a man trusteth in himself, he easily falleth to human comforts.

But a true lover of Christ and a diligent follower of all virtue, doth not fall back on comforts nor seek such sensible sweetnesses, but rather prefereth to endure hard trials and to sustain severe labors for Christ.

4. When therefore spiritual comfort is given thee from God, receive it with thankfulness ; but understand that it is the gift of God, not thy desert.

Be not puffed up, be not too joyful, nor vainly presumptuous ; but rather be the more humble for that gift, more wary too and fearful in all thine actions, for that hour will pass away and temptation will follow.

When consolation is taken from thee do not immediately despair, but with humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation ; for God is able to give thee back again more ample consolation.

This is nothing new nor strange unto them that have experience in the way of God ; for the great saints and ancient prophets had oftentimes experience of such kind of vicissitudes.

5. For which cause, one, while he was basking in divine grace, said, — In my abundance I have said, I shall never be moved.^o

But in the absence of it, he adds this experience of what he was in himself, — Thou hast turned away thy face from me, and I have become troubled.

Yet in the midst of all this he doth not by any means despair, but more earnestly beseecheth the Lord and saith, — To thee, O Lord, will I cry, and I will pray to my God.

At length, he receiveth the fruit of his prayer, and testifieth that he was heard, saying, — The Lord hath

heard me, and hath had mercy on me; the Lord is become my helper.

But in what manner? Thou hast turned, saith he, my mourning into joy, and hast compassed me about with gladness.

If great saints were so dealt with, we that are weak and poor ought not to despair if we be sometimes hot and sometimes cold; for the Spirit cometh and goeth according to the good pleasure of His own will.

For which cause holy Job saith, — Thou visitest him early in the morning, and then provest him suddenly.

6. Whereupon then can I hope or wherein ought I to trust, save in the great mercy of God alone and in the hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have with me good men or devout brethren or faithful friends, whether holy books or beautiful treatises or sweet psalms and hymns, — all these help but little and have but little savor, when grace forsaketh me and I am left in mine own poverty.

At such time there is no better remedy than patience and the denying of myself according to the will of God.

7. I never found any one so religious and devout that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace or felt not some decrease of zeal.

There was never saint so highly rapt and illuminated who first or last was not tempted.

For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God who hath not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake.

For temptation going before is wont to be a sign of comfort to follow.

For unto those that are proved by temptations heavenly comfort is promised. To him that overcometh, saith He, I will give to eat of the tree of life.

8. But divine consolation is given that a man may be stronger to bear adversities; and there followeth temptation lest he should wax proud of any good.

The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh as yet dead; therefore cease not to prepare thyself for battle, for on thy right hand and on thy left are enemies who never rest.

CHAPTER X

Of Gratitude for the Grace of God

WHY seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labor?

Dispose thyself to patience rather than to com-

fort, and to the bearing of the cross rather than to gladness.

What worldly man is there that would not willingly receive spiritual joy and comfort if he could have it always?

For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world and the pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or unclean; but spiritual delights alone are pleasant and honorable, being sprung from virtue and infused by God into pure minds.

But no man can always enjoy these divine comforts according to his desire, for the time of temptation is never far away.

2. False freedom of mind and great confidence in ourselves are very contrary to heavenly visitations.

God doeth well for us in giving the grace of consolation; but man doeth ill in not returning all again unto God with thanksgiving.

And therefore the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are unthankful to the Giver and return them not wholly to the Source and Fountain.

For grace ever attendeth him that is duly thankful; and from the proud shall be taken that which is given to the humble.

3. I desire no consolation that taketh from me compunction ; nor do I affect that contemplation which leadeth to pride of intellect.

For all that is high is not holy ; nor all that is sweet, good ; nor every desire, pure ; nor is everything that is dear unto us pleasing to God.

Willingly do I accept that grace whereby I may ever be found more humble and more affected with fear, and may become more ready to renounce myself.

He that is taught by the gift of grace and schooled by the withdrawing thereof, will not dare to attribute any good to himself but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked.

Give unto God that which is God's, and ascribe unto thyself that which is thine own ; that is, give thanks to God for His grace, and acknowledge that to thyself alone is to be attributed sin and the punishment due to sin.

4. Set thyself always in the lowest place and the highest shall be given thee ; for the highest is not without the lowest.

The saints that are the greatest before God are the least in their own eyes ; and the more glorious they are, so much the humbler within themselves.

They that are full of truth and heavenly glory are not desirous of empty honor.

They that are firmly settled and grounded in God can in no way be proud.

And they that ascribe all good unto God, whatsoever they have received, seek not glory one of another but desire that glory which is from God alone, and above all things strive that God may be praised in Himself, and in all His saints ; and to this they ever tend.

5. Be therefore thankful for the least gift ; so shalt thou be meet to receive greater.

Let the least be unto thee even as the greatest, yea the most contemptible gift as of especial value.

If thou consider the worth of the giver, no gift will seem of little worth ; for that cannot be little which is given by the Most High God.

Yea, if He should give punishment and stripes, it ought to be matter of thankfulness ; because He doeth always for our welfare whatsoever He permitteth to happen unto us.

Let him that desireth to keep the grace of God be thankful for grace given and patient for the taking away thereof : let him pray that it may return ; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

CHAPTER XI

That the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus are Few

JESUS hath now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His cross.

He hath many desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to endure any thing for Him.

Many follow JESUS unto the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the cup of His passion.

Many reverence His miracles ; few follow the ignominy of His cross.

Many love JESUS so long as no adversities befall them ; many praise and bless Him so long as they receive any consolation from Him : But if JESUS hide Himself and leave them but a little while, they fall either into complaining or into too much dejection of mind.

2. But they who love JESUS for His own sake and

not for some special comfort which they receive, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart as well as in the greatest consolation.

Yea, although He should never be willing to give them comfort, they notwithstanding would ever praise Him and wish to be always giving thanks.

3. O how powerful is the pure love of JESUS, which is mixed with no self-interest or self-love !

Are not all those to be called mercenary who are ever seeking consolations ?

Do they not show themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own profit and advantage ?

Where shall one be found who is willing to serve God for nought ?

4. Rarely is any one found so spiritual as to have suffered the loss of all things.

For where is any man to be found that is indeed poor in spirit and thoroughly void of all leaning on created things ? His value is as things from afar and from the remotest coasts.

If a man should give all his substance, it is nothing ; and if he should practise great penances, still it is little ; and if he should attain to all knowledge, he is still far

off ; and if he should be of great virtue and of very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting: Especially one thing, which is most necessary for him.

What is that ? That leaving all, he forsake himself, and go wholly out of himself, and retain nothing of self-love.

And when he hath done all that is to be done, so far as he knoweth, let him think that he hath done nothing.

5. Let him not think that of great weight, which might be esteemed great ; but let him in truth pronounce himself to be an unprofitable servant, as the Truth Himself saith, — When you shall have done all things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the Prophet, I am alone and poor.

Yet no one is richer than that man, no one more powerful, no one more free ; for he knoweth how to leave himself and all things and to put himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Royal Road of the Holy Cross

TO many this seemeth a hard saying, — Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow JESUS.

But much harder will it be to hear that last word, — Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

For they who now willingly hear and follow the word of the cross shall not then fear to hear the sentence of everlasting damnation.

This sign of the cross shall be in the heavens, when the Lord shall come to judge.

Then all the servants of the cross, who in their lifetime conformed themselves unto Christ crucified, shall draw nigh to Christ the judge with great confidence.

2. Why therefore fearest thou to take up the cross which leadeth thee to a kingdom?

In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection against enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit, in the cross is height of virtue, in the cross is perfection of sanctity.

There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the cross.

Take up therefore thy cross and follow JESUS, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He went before thee, bearing His cross and died for thee on the cross, that thou mightest also bear thy cross and desire to die with Him on the cross.

For if thou be dead with Him, thou shalt also live with Him. And if thou be His companion in punishment, thou shalt be partaker with Him also in glory.

3. Behold, in the cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying thereon ; for there is no other way to life and true inward peace but the way of the holy cross and of daily mortification.

Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

Dispose and order all things according to thy will and judgment, yet thou shalt ever find that of necessity thou must suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so thou shalt ever find the cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in thy body, or in thy soul thou shalt suffer tribulation.

4. Sometimes thou shalt be forsaken of God, some-

times thou shalt be troubled by thy neighbor ; and what is more, oftentimes thou shalt be wearisome to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort ; but so long as it pleaseth God, thou must bear it.

For God will have thee learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, to subject thyself wholly to Him and through tribulation become more humble.

No man hath so great sympathy with the passion of Christ as he who hath suffered a passion himself.

The cross is always ready and everywhere waiteth for thee.

Thou canst not escape it whithersoever thou runnest ; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee and shalt ever find thyself.

Both above and below, without and within, which way soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the cross ; and everywhere of necessity thou must have patience if thou wilt have inward peace and enjoy an everlasting crown.

5. If thou bear the cross willingly it will bear thee and lead thee to the desired end, namely, where there shall be an end of suffering, though here there shall not be.

If thou bear it unwillingly thou makest for thyself a burden and increasest thy load, which notwithstanding thou must bear.

If thou cast away one cross, without doubt thou shalt find another and that perhaps more heavy.

6. Thinkest thou to escape that which no mortal man could ever avoid? Which of the saints in the world was without crosses and tribulations?

For not even our Lord JESUS Christ was ever one hour without the anguish of His passion, so long as He lived. Christ, saith He, must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and so enter into His glory.

And how dost thou seek any other road than this royal road, which is the way of the holy cross?

7. Christ's whole life was a cross and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek rest and joy for thyself?

Thou art deceived, thou art deceived, if thou seek any other thing than to suffer tribulations; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries and marked on every side with crosses.

And the higher a person hath advanced in spirit, so much the heavier crosses he oftentimes findeth; because the grief of his banishment increaseth with his love.

8. Nevertheless this man, though so many ways afflicted, is not without refreshing comfort, for he perceiveth very much benefit to accrue unto him by the bearing of his own cross.

For whilst he willingly putteth himself under it, all the burden of tribulation is turned into the confidence of divine comfort.

And the more the flesh is wasted by affliction, so much the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace.

And sometimes he is so comforted with the desire of tribulation and adversity for the love of conformity to the cross of Christ, that he would not wish to be without grief and tribulation, because he believeth that he shall be unto God so much the more acceptable the more grievous things he is permitted to suffer for Him.

This is not the power of man but the grace of Christ which can and doth effect so much in frail flesh, so that what naturally the flesh abhors and flees from, even that, through fervor of spirit, it embraces and loves.

9. It is not according to man's inclination to bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it into subjection, to flee honors, willingly to suffer contumelies, to despise one's self and to wish to be

despised, to endure all adversities and losses and to desire no prosperity in this world.

If thou look to thyself, thou shalt be able of thyself to accomplish nothing of this kind.

But if thou trust in the Lord, strength shall be given thee from heaven, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to thy command.

Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy the devil, if thou be armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ.

10. Set thyself therefore like a good and faithful servant of Christ to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord who out of love was crucified for thee.

Prepare thyself to bear many adversities and divers kinds of troubles in this miserable life, for so it will be with thee wheresoever thou art and so surely thou shalt find it wheresoever thou hide thyself.

So it must be, nor is there any remedy nor means to escape from tribulation and sorrow but only to endure them.

Drink of the Lord's cup with hearty affection if thou desire to be His friend and to have part with Him.

As for comforts, leave them to God ; let Him do therein as shall best please Him.

But do thou set thyself to suffer tribulations and

account them the greatest comforts ; for the sufferings of this present time, although thou alone couldst suffer them all, cannot worthily deserve the glory which is to come.

11. When thou shalt come to this estate, that tribulation shall seem sweet and thou shalt relish it for Christ's sake, then think it to be well with thee for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as it is grievous to thee to suffer and thou desirest to escape, so long shalt thou be ill at ease and the desire of escaping tribulation shall follow thee everywhere.

12. If thou dost set thyself to that thou oughtest, namely, to suffering and to death, it will quickly be better with thee and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldst have been rapt even unto the third heaven with Saint Paul, thou art not by this secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity. I will show him, saith JESUS, how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

It remaineth, therefore, that thou suffer, if it please thee to love JESUS and to serve Him always.

13. Oh, that thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of JESUS ! How great glory would be

laid up for thee, what joy would arise to all God's saints, how great edification also to thy neighbor !

For all men recommend patience ; few, however, they are who are willing to suffer.

With great reason oughtest thou cheerfully to suffer some little for Christ's sake, since many suffer more grievous things for the world.

14. Know for certain that thou oughtest to lead a dying life ; and the more any man dieth to himself, so much the more doth he begin to live to God.

No man is fit to comprehend things heavenly unless he submit himself to the bearing of adversities for Christ's sake.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more wholesome to thee in this world, than that thou suffer cheerfully for Christ.

And if thou couldst choose, thou oughtest rather to wish to suffer adversities for Christ than to be refreshed with many consolations, because thou wouldst thus be more like unto Christ and more conformable to all the saints.

For our merit and spiritual growth consisteth not in many sweetnesses and comforts, but rather in the patient enduring of great afflictions and tribulations.

15. If indeed there had been anything better, and more profitable to man's salvation than suffering, surely Christ would have shown it by word and example.

For both the disciples that followed Him and all who desire to follow Him, He plainly exhorteth to the bearing of the cross, saying, — If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

So that when we have thoroughly read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, — That through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

THE THIRD BOOK

CONCERNING THE HOLY COMMUNION

A Devout Exhortation to the Holy Communion

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

COME to me, all you that labor and are burdened,
and I will refresh you, saith the Lord.

The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.

Take ye and eat; this is my body, which shall be delivered for you; do this in commemoration of me.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him.

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

CHAPTER I

With how Great Reverence Christ ought to be Received

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

THESE are thy words, O Christ, the everlasting Truth, though not spoken all at one time nor written in one place.

Because therefore they are thine and true, they are all thankfully and faithfully to be received by me.

They are thine, and thou hast pronounced them; and they are mine also because thou hast spoken them for my salvation.

I cheerfully receive them from thy mouth that they may be the more deeply ingrafted in my heart.

They encourage me, those most gracious words, so full of sweetness and of love; but mine own offences dishearten me and an impure conscience driveth me back from receiving so great mysteries.

The sweetness of thy words doth encourage me, but the multitude of my sins weigheth me down.

2. •Thou commandest me to come confidently unto thee if I would have part with thee, and to receive the food of immortality if I desire to obtain everlasting life and glory.

Come to me, sayest thou, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

O sweet and loving word in the ear of a sinner that thou, my Lord God, shouldst invite the poor and needy to the Communion of thy most holy body!

But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach unto thee?

Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, and thou sayest, Come ye all to me.

3. What meaneth this gracious condescension and this so loving invitation?

How shall I dare to come, who know not any good in myself whereupon I may presume?

How shall I bring thee into my house, I that have so often offended thy most gracious countenance?

Angels and archangels stand in awe of thee, the saints and the just are afraid, and sayest thou, Come ye all to me.

Unless thou, O Lord, didst say this, who would believe it to be true?

And unless thou didst command it, who could attempt to draw near?

Behold, Noe,^o that just man, labored a hundred years in building the ark, that he might be saved with a few; and how can I in one hour prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

4. Moses,^o thy great servant and special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with the finest gold, wherein to lay up the tables of the law; and I, a corruptible creature, how shall I dare so unconcernedly to receive the Maker of the law and the Giver of life?

Solomon,^o the wisest of the kings of Israel, bestowed seven years in building a magnificent temple to the praise of thy name.

He celebrated the feast of dedication thereof eight days together; he offered a thousand peace offerings, and he solemnly set the ark of the covenant in the place prepared for it, with trumpet blasts and jubilation.

And I, the most miserable and poorest of men, how shall I bring thee into my house, I that can scarce spend one half hour in true devotion? And would that I could spend even one half hour as I ought!

5. O my God, how earnestly did they study and endeavor to please thee !

Alas, how little is that which I do ! How short a time do I spend when I am preparing myself to receive the Communion !

Seldom am I wholly recollected ; very seldom indeed am I cleansed from all distraction.

And yet, surely, in the lifegiving presence of thy Godhead, no unbecoming thought should intrude itself nor should any creature occupy my heart ; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of angels, whom I am about to entertain.

6. And yet very great is the difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and thy most pure body with its unspeakable virtues ; between those legal sacrifices, figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of thy body, the fulfilment of all ancient sacrifices.

Why therefore am I not more ardent and zealous in seeking thine adorable presence ?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive thy holy gifts when those holy ancient patriarchs and prophets, yea, kings also and princes, with the whole people, showed such an affectionate devotion towards thy divine worship ?

7. The most devout king David danced^o before the ark of God with all his might, calling to mind the benefits bestowed in time past upon his forefathers. He made instruments of sundry kinds, he set forth psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy ; he also oftentimes himself sung to the harp, being inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole hearts and with voices full of harmony to bless and praise him every day.

If so great devotion was then used, and such celebrating of divine praise was observed before the ark of the covenant, what reverence and devotion ought now to be preserved by me and all Christian people during the ministration of this sacrament, in receiving the most precious body of Christ.

8. Many run to divers places to visit the relics of saints,^o are full of admiration at hearing of their deeds, behold with awe the spacious buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones shrouded in silk and gold.

But, behold, thou art thyself here present with me on thine altar, my God, Saint of saints, Creator of men, and Lord of angels.

Often, in looking at such relics, men are moved by

curiosity and by the novelty of fresh sights, whilst little or no fruit of amendment is carried home ; particularly when they go from place to place with levity, without a true contrition.

But here, in the Sacrament of the Altar, thou art wholly present, my God, the man Christ JESUS ; here, to all worthy and devout receivers, is granted an abundant fruit of eternal salvation.

There is here to attract men nothing that savors of levity, of curiosity, or of sensuality ; nothing but firm faith, devout hope, and sincere charity.

9. O God, the invisible Creator of the world, how wonderfully dost thou deal with us ; how sweetly and graciously dost thou dispose of all things with thine elect, to whom thou offerest thyself to be received in this sacrament !

For this verily exceedeth all understanding ; this specially draweth the hearts of the devout, and inflameth their affections.

For even thy true faithful ones, who dispose their whole life to amendment, by this most precious sacrament oftentimes gain much of the grace of devotion and love of virtue.

10. O the admirable and hidden grace of this sacra-

ment, which only the faithful ones of Christ do know, which the unbelieving and such as are slaves to sin cannot experience.

In this sacrament spiritual grace is conferred, and the strength which was lost is restored in the soul, and the beauty which by sin had been disfigured again returneth.

This grace is sometimes so great that out of the fullness of devotion here given, not the mind only, but the weak body also, feeleth great increase of strength bestowed on it.

11. Nevertheless our coldness and negligence is much to be bewailed and pitied, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ in whom doth consist all the hope and merit of those that are to be saved.

For He Himself is our sanctification and redemption ; He Himself is the comfort of those who are here but travellers, and the everlasting fruition of the saints.

It is therefore much to be lamented that many do so little consider this salutary mystery, which causeth joy in heaven and preserveth the whole world.

Alas for the blindness and hardness of man's heart that doth not more deeply weigh so unspeakable a gift,

but rather by the daily use thereof falleth into carelessness !

12. For if this most holy sacrament were to be celebrated in one place only and consecrated by but one priest in the world, with how great desires dost thou think would men be affected to that place and toward such a priest of God, that they might be witnesses of the celebration of these divine mysteries ?

But now many are made priests and in many places Christ is offered, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater the more widely this sacred Communion is spread over the world.

Thanks be to thee, O good JESUS, thou eternal shepherd, that thou hast vouchsafed to refresh us poor exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these mysteries with the words of thine own mouth, saying, — Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you.

CHAPTER II

That the Great Goodness and Love of God is shown to Man
in this Sacrament

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

TRUSTING in thy goodness and great mercy, O Lord, I draw near as one sick to the Healer, as one hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of Life, as one needy to the King of heaven, a servant to my Lord, a creature to my Creator, a desolate soul to my gentle Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that thou vouchsafest to come unto me? What am I, that thou shouldst grant thine own self unto me?

How dare a sinner appear before thee? And how is it that thou dost vouchsafe to come unto a sinner?

Thou knowest thy servant, thou knowest that he hath in him nothing that is good for which thou shouldst grant him this favor.

I confess therefore mine own unworthiness, I acknowl-

edge thy goodness, I praise thy tender mercy and give thee thanks for this thy transcendent love.

For thou doest this for thine own sake, not for any merits of mine, to the end that thy goodness may be better known to me, thy love more abundantly lavished upon me, and thy gracious humility more eminently set forth.

Since therefore it is thy pleasure and thou hast commanded that it should be so, this that seemeth to thee good pleaseth me also ; and would that mine iniquity might be no hindrance !

2. O most sweet and most bountiful JESUS, how great reverence and thanksgiving, together with perpetual praise, are due unto thee for the receiving of thy sacred body, whose dignity no man is able to express !

But on what shall my thoughts dwell in this Communion, in thus approaching unto my Lord, whom I am not able duly to honor, and yet whom I cannot but desire devoutly to receive ?

3. What better and more profitable can I do than utterly to humble myself before thee and to exalt thine infinite goodness ?

I praise thee, my God, and extol thee forever ; I

despise myself and cast myself down before thee, into the deep of mine own unworthiness.

Behold, thou art the Saint of saints, and I the scum of sinners !

Behold, thou inclinest thyself unto me, and I am not worthy to look up to thee !

Behold, thou comest unto me ; it is thy will to be with me ; thou invitest me to thy banquet.

Thou art willing to give me heavenly food and the bread of angels to eat, which is indeed no other than thyself the living bread, which camest down from heaven, and givest life to the world.

4. Behold, whence love proceedeth ! What gracious condescension shineth forth ! What great thanks and praises are due unto thee for these benefits !

Oh, how wholesome and profitable was thy design, when thou didst institute this sweet and pleasant banquet, when thou gavest thyself to be our food !

Oh, how admirable is this thy work, O Lord, how mighty is thy power, how unspeakable thy truth !

For thou didst speak the word and all things were made ; and this was done which thou didst command.

5. A thing much to be admired, worthy of all faith and surpassing man's understanding, that thou, my

Lord God, true God and man, shouldst offer thyself whole and entire to us in a little bread and wine, and, without being consumed, art eaten by the receiver.

Thou who art the Lord of the universe and standest in need of no one, art pleased to dwell in us by means of this sacrament.

Preserve my heart and body undefiled, that with a cheerful and pure conscience I may be able often to celebrate and to receive to my everlasting health those mysteries which thou didst specially ordain and institute for thine honor and for a never-ceasing memorial of thee.

6. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so noble a gift and so precious a consolation left unto thee in this vale of tears.

For as often as thou callest to mind this mystery and receivest the body of Christ, so often dost thou celebrate the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the love of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore thou oughtest to dispose thyself hereunto by continual renewal of thy spirit, and to weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of salvation.

So great, so new, and so joyful ought it to seem to

thee when thou celebratest or hearest Mass, as if on this same day Christ, first descending into the womb of the Virgin, were become man, or hanging on the cross, did this day suffer and die for the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER III

That it is profitable to communicate Often°

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

BEHOLD, O Lord, I come unto thee that I may be comforted in thy gift and be delighted in thy holy banquet, which thou, O God, hast in thy sweetness prepared for the poor.

Behold, in thee is all whatsoever I can or ought to desire ; thou art my salvation and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my honor and my glory.

Make therefore this day the soul of thy servant joyful, for unto thee, O Lord JESUS, have I lifted up my soul.

I desire to receive thee now with devotion and reverence ; I desire to bring thee into my house that with

Zaccheus° I may be blessed by thee, and be numbered amongst the children of Abraham.

My soul thirsteth to receive thy body, my heart longeth to be united to thee.

2. Give thyself to me and it is enough, for without thee there is no comfort.

Without thee I cannot be ; without thy visitation I cannot endure to live.

And therefore I must needs often draw near unto thee and receive thee for the medicine of my soul, lest haply I faint by the way if I be deprived of this heavenly food.

For so, most merciful JESUS, thou once didst say, when preaching to the people and curing divers diseases, — I will not send them home fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Deal thou in like manner now with me, who hast vouchsafed to leave thyself in this sacrament for the comfort of the faithful.

For thou art the sweet reflection of the soul, and he that eateth thee worthily shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

It is needful for me, who so often fall into error and sin and so quickly wax dull and faint, that by frequent

prayer and confession, and the receiving of thy holy body, I renew, cleanse, and inflame myself, lest haply, by long abstaining, I fall away from my holy purposes.

3. For the senses of man are prone to evil from his youth, and unless some divine remedy help him he quickly falleth away to worse things.

Holy Communion therefore draweth men back from evil and strengtheneth them in good.

For if I be now so often negligent and lukewarm when I communicate or celebrate, what would become of me if I received not this remedy and sought not so great a help?

Although every day I be not fit nor well prepared, I will endeavor notwithstanding at proper times to receive the divine mysteries and to be partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the one chief consolation of the faithful soul, so long as she sojourneth afar from thee in this mortal body, that being mindful of her God, she often receive her beloved with devout mind.

4. O the wonderful condescension of thy tender mercy towards us, that thou, O Lord God, the Creator and Giver of Life to all spirits, dost vouchsafe to come

unto a poor soul and with thy whole divinity and humanity to appease her hunger !

O happy mind and blessed soul, that hath the privilege of receiving thee, her Lord God, with devout affection, and in so receiving thee is filled with spiritual joy !

O how great a Lord doth she entertain ! How beloved a guest doth she bring into her house ! How delightful a companion doth she receive ! How faithful a friend doth she welcome ! How beautiful and noble a spouse doth she embrace, to be loved above all things that are loved and above all things that can be desired !

O thou most sweet Beloved, let heaven and earth and all that adorns them be silent in thy presence ; for what praise and beauty soever they have, is received from thy bounteous condescension and shall never equal the grace and beauty of thy name, whose wisdom is infinite.

CHAPTER IV

*That Many Benefits are bestowed upon those that
communicate Devoutly*

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O LORD, my God, prevent thy servant with the blessings of thy goodness, that I may approach worthily and devoutly to thy glorious sacrament.

Stir up my heart unto thee and deliver me from all dulness. Visit me with thy saving grace, that I may taste in spirit thy sweetness, which plentifully lieth hid in this sacrament as in a fountain.

Enlighten also mine eyes to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me with undoubting faith to believe it.

For it is thy work, not human power; thy sacred institution, not man's invention.

For of himself no man is able to comprehend and understand these things which surpass the understanding even of angels.

What portion, then, of so high and sacred a mystery

shall I, unworthy sinner, dust and ashes, be able to search out and comprehend?

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith and at thy command, I draw near unto thee with hope and reverence, and do truly believe that thou art here present in this sacrament, both God and man.

Thy will is that I should receive thee and that I should unite myself unto thee in charity.

Wherefore I implore thy mercy and crave thy special grace, to the end that I may wholly be dissolved and overflow with love, and never hereafter suffer any external consolation to enter in.

For this most high and precious sacrament is the health both of soul and body, the medicine for all spiritual langour; hereby my vices are cured, my passions bridled, my temptations overcome or at least weakened, greater grace infused, virtue increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and love inflamed and enlarged.

3. For thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many benefits in this sacrament upon thy beloved ones that communicate devoutly, O my God, the protector of my soul, the strength of human frailty and the giver of all interior consolation.

Thou impartest unto them much comfort against sundry tribulations, and liftest them up from the depth of their own dejected state to hope in thy protection, and dost inwardly refresh and enlighten them with new grace, so that they who before communion felt themselves full of anxiety and heartlessness, afterwards, being refreshed with heavenly meat and drink, find in themselves a change for the better.

And in such a way of dispensation thou dealest with thine elect, that they may truly acknowledge and clearly prove how great their own infirmity is and what goodness and grace they obtain from thee.

For they of themselves are cold, dull, and undevout ; but by thee they are made fervent, cheerful, and full of devotion.

For who is there that approaching humbly unto the fountain of sweetness, doth not carry away from thence at least some little sweetness ?

Or who, standing by a great fire, receiveth not some small heat ?

And thou art a fountain always full and overflowing, a fire ever burning and never failing.

4. Wherefore, if I am not permitted to draw out of the fulness of the fountain, nor to drink my fill, I will

at least set my lips to the mouth of this heavenly conduit, that I may receive from thence at least some small drop to refresh my thirst, that so I may not be wholly dried up.

And though I cannot as yet be altogether heavenly nor so full of love as the cherubim and seraphim,^o yet I will endeavor to apply myself earnestly to devotion and prepare my heart to obtain if it be but some small spark of divine fire, by the humble receiving of this life-giving sacrament.

And whatsoever is hereunto wanting in me, O merciful JESUS, most holy Saviour, do thou bountifully and graciously supply for me, thou who hast vouchsafed to call us all unto thee, saying, — Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

5. I indeed labor in the sweat of my brow, I am vexed with grief of heart, I am burdened with sins, I am troubled with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me, but thou, O Lord God my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that thou mayest keep watch over me and bring me safe to life everlasting.

Receive me for the honor and glory of thy name,

thou who hast prepared thy body and blood to be my food and drink.

Grant, O Lord God, my Saviour, that by frequenting thy mysteries the zeal of my devotion may grow and increase.

CHAPTER V

Of the Dignity of this Sacrament, and of the priestly State^o

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

IF thou hadst the purity of an angel and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive or to administer this sacrament.

For it is not within the compass of the deserts of men that man should consecrate and administer this sacrament of Christ and receive for food the bread of angels.

Great is this mystery, and great is the dignity of those to whom is granted that which is not permitted to angels.

For only priests rightly ordained in the Church have

power to celebrate this sacrifice and to consecrate the body of Christ.

The priest is indeed the minister of God, using the word of God by God's command and appointment; but God is there the principal author and invisible worker, to whom is subject all that he shall please, and whom every thing that he commandeth doth obey.

2. Thou oughtest therefore more to believe God Almighty in this most excellent sacrament than thine own sense or any visible sign.

And therefore thou art to approach this holy work with fear and reverence.

Consider attentively with thyself and see what that is whereof the ministry is delivered unto thee by the laying on of the bishop's hand. •

Behold, thou art made a priest and consecrated to celebrate. Take heed now that thou offer this sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly and in due season, and conduct thyself so as thou mayest be without reproof.

Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now bound with a straiter band of discipline, and art obliged to a greater perfection of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and give example of good life to others.

His life and conversation should not be in the common ways of mankind, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men on earth.

3. A priest clad in his sacred vestments is the ambassador of Christ, that with all supplication and humility he may beseech God for himself and for the whole people.

He hath before him and behind him the sign of the cross of the Lord, that he may always remember the passion of Christ.

He beareth the cross before him on his vestment, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ and strive fervently to follow therein.

He is marked with the cross behind him, that he may suffer meekly for God's sake whatsoever evils shall befall him.

He carrieth the cross before him that he may bewail his own sins, and behind him that he may compassionately lament the sins of others, and realize that he is placed as a mediator between God and the sinner.

Neither ought he to cease from prayer and holy oblation till he prevail to obtain grace and mercy.

When a priest doth celebrate, he honoreth God, he rejoiceth the angels, he edifieth the Church, he helpeth

the living, he obtaineth rest for the departed, and maketh himself partaker of all good things.

CHAPTER VI

A Petition concerning the Exercises before Communion

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHEN I weigh thy greatness, O Lord, and mine own vileness, I tremble exceedingly and am confounded within myself.

For if I come not unto thee I fly from life, and if I unworthily intrude myself I incur thy displeasure.

What therefore shall I do, O my God, my helper and my counsellor in all necessity?

2. Teach thou me the right way, appoint me some brief exercise, suitable for Holy Communion.

For it is good for me to know how I should reverently and religiously prepare my heart for thee, for the profitable receiving of this sacrament of thine or for the celebrating of so great and divine a sacrifice.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Examination of Conscience, and of a Resolution of
Amendment

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

ABOVE all things, the priest of God ought to come to celebrate and to receive this sacrament with very great humility of heart and with reverential supplication, with a full faith and a dutiful regard for God's honor.

Examine diligently thy conscience, and to the utmost of thy power purify and cleanse it with true contrition and humble confession, so as there may be nothing in thee that may be burdensome unto thee or that may breed in thee remorse of conscience and hinder thy free access to the throne of grace.

Be grieved at the recollection of all thy sins in general, and in particular bewail and lament thy daily transgressions.

And if thou hast time, confess unto God in the secret of thine heart all the miserable evils of thy disordered passions.

2. Lament thou and grieve, that thou art yet so carnal and worldly, so unmortified in thy passions, so full of the motions of concupiscence ;

So unwatchful over thy outward senses, so often entangled with many vain fancies ;

So much inclined to outward things, so negligent in things interior and spiritual ;

So prone to laughter and unbridled mirth, so indisposed to tears and compunction ;

So prompt to ease and the pleasures of the flesh, so dull to austerity and zeal ;

So curious to hear news and to see beautiful sights, so slack to embrace what is humble and low ;

So covetous of abundance, so niggardly in giving and so fast in keeping ;

So inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant to keep silence ;

So uncomposed in manners, so fretful in action ;

So eager about food, so deaf to the word of God ;

So prompt to rest, so slow to labor ;

So wakeful in vain conversation, so drowsy at the sacred vigils ;

So hasty to arrive at the end thereof, so inclined to be wandering and inattentive ;

So negligent in saying thy office,^o so lukewarm in celebrating, so dry and heartless in receiving ;

So quickly distracted, so seldom wholly recollected ;

So suddenly moved to anger, so apt to take displeasure against another ;

So ready to judge, so severe to reprove ;

So joyful in prosperity, so weak in adversity ;

So often making good resolutions, and yet bringing them at last to so poor effect.

3. These and other thy defects being confessed and bewailed with sorrow and great displeasure at thine own infirmity, make thou a firm resolution always to be amending thy life and to be endeavoring always after further growth in holiness.

Then with full resignation and with thy whole will, do thou, to the honor of my name, offer up thyself a perpetual whole burnt offering on the altar of thy heart, faithfully committing thy body and soul to me.

And then thou mayest be accounted worthy to draw near to offer sacrifice unto God, and to receive profitably the sacrament of my body.

4. For man hath no oblation more worthy, nor any means greater for the destroying of sin, than to offer himself unto God purely and wholly together with the

oblation of the body and blood of Christ in the mass and in Communion.

And when a man shall have done what lieth in him, and shall be truly penitent, how often soever he shall come to me for pardon and grace, — As I live, saith the Lord, who will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, I will not remember his sins any more, but they shall all be forgiven him.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross and of Self-resignation

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

OF my own will did I offer up myself unto God the Father for thy sins. My hands were stretched forth on the cross and my body laid bare, so that nothing remained in me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the appeasing of the divine Majesty.

In like manner oughtest thou also to offer thyself willingly unto me daily in the mass as a pure and holy

oblation, with all thy strength and affections, as intimately as thou canst.

What do I require of thee more than that thou study to resign thyself entirely to me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself is of no value in my sight, for I seek not thy gifts, but thee.

2. As it would not suffice thee to have all things whatsoever without me, so neither can it please me whatsoever thou givest, if thou give not thyself.

Offer up thyself unto me and give thyself wholly to God, and thine offering shall be acceptable.

Behold, I offered up myself wholly unto my Father for thee, and gave my whole body and blood for thy food, that I might be wholly thine and that thou mightest continue mine to the end.

But if thou abide in self and do not offer thyself up freely unto my will, thine oblation is not entire, and there will be no perfect union between us.

Therefore a free offering of thyself into the hands of God ought to go before all thine actions, if thou desire to obtain liberty and grace.

For this cause so few become inwardly free and enlightened, because they are loath wholly to deny themselves.

My sentence standeth sure, — Unless a man renounce all, he cannot be my disciple. If thou therefore desire to be my disciple, offer up thyself unto me with thy whole heart.

CHAPTER IX

That we ought to offer ourselves and All that is ours to God,
and pray for All

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

THINE, O Lord, are all things that are in heaven and on earth.

I desire to offer up myself to thee as a free oblation, and to continue thine forever.

O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself unto thee this day in humble submission for a sacrifice of perpetual praise, and to be thy servant forever.

Receive me with this holy oblation of thy precious body, which offering I make to thee this day in the presence of angels invisibly attending; and may this be for my good and the good of all thy people.

2. I offer unto thee, O Lord, all my sins and offences,

which I have committed before thee, from the day wherein I first could sin until this hour. I offer them upon thine altar of propitiation, that thou mayest consume and burn them all with the fire of thy love ; that thou mayest wash out all the stains of my sins. Cleanse my conscience from all offences and restore to me again thy grace, which I have lost by sin, forgiving me all my offences and receiving me mercifully to the kiss of peace.

3. What can I do for my sins but humbly confess and bewail them and unceasingly entreat thy mercy ?

I beseech thee, hear me graciously, when I stand before thee, my God.

All my sins are very displeasing to me, I will never commit them any more ; but I grieve, and will grieve for them as long as I live, and am purposed to repent, and according to the utmost of my power to make restitution.

Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for the sake of thy holy name ; save thou my soul which thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood.

Behold, I commit myself unto thy mercy, I resign myself into thy hands.

Deal with me according to thy goodness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

4. I offer up also unto thee all whatsoever is good in me, although it be very small and imperfect, that thou mayest amend and sanctify it. Make it grateful and acceptable unto thee and always perfect it more and more, and bring me, a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a good and blessed end.

5. I offer up also unto thee all the pious desires of devout persons, the necessities of parents, friends, brethren, sisters, and of all those that are dear unto me and that have done good either to myself or to others for thy love ; also of all that have desired of me to offer prayers and masses for them and theirs, whether they yet live in the flesh or are now departed out of this world.

Grant that all may receive the help of thy grace, the aid of thy consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from pain ; that they, being freed from all evils, may with joy return abundant thanksgivings unto thee.

6. I offer up also unto thee my prayers and intercessions for those especially who have in any thing wronged, grieved, or slandered me, or have done me any damage or displeasure.

I pray for all those, also, whom I have at any time vexed, troubled, grieved, or scandalized by word or deed,

knowingly or unknowingly, that it may please thee to forgive us all our sins and offences, one against another.

Take away from our hearts, O Lord, all suspicion, indignation, wrath, and contention, and whatsoever may hurt charity and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave thy mercy; give grace unto them that stand in need thereof, and make us worthy to enjoy thy grace and go forward to life eternal. *Amen.*

CHAPTER X

That the Holy Communion is not lightly to be Postponed

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and of all purity, that thou mayest be healed of thy sins and passions and be made more strong and vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy, knowing what great profit and restoring power cometh by the Holy Communion, endeavoreth by all means and occasions to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from partaking thereof.

2. Thus it is that some persons, when they are preparing for Holy Communion, suffer more violent assaults of Satan.

That wicked spirit, as it is written in Job, cometh amongst the sons of God to trouble them according to his accustomed malice, or to render them over fearful and perplexed, that so he may diminish their devotion, or by direct assaults take away their faith, to the end that he may prevail on them, if possible, either altogether to forbear communicating, or at least to approach with lukewarmness.

But there is no heed to be taken of his crafty and fanciful suggestions, be they ever so filthy and hideous, but all such vain imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head.

Thou must despise him and laugh him to scorn, nor dare to omit the Holy Communion on account of his assaults, or for the troubles which he raiseth within thee.

3. Oftentimes, too, a person is hindered by undue

solicitude for obtaining devotion, and a certain anxiety about making his confession.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and lay aside all anxiety and scruple, for it hindereth the grace of God, and overthroweth devotion.

Do not omit the Holy Communion for every small vexation and trouble, but rather proceed at once to confess thy sins, and cheerfully forgive others whatever offences they have done against thee.

And if thou hast offended, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

4. What availeth it to delay long thy confession or to defer the Holy Communion?

Purge thyself quickly, spit out the poison with all speed, make haste to apply this sovereign remedy, and thou shalt find it to be better with thee than if thou didst long defer it.

If thou omit it to-day for one cause, perhaps to-morrow another of greater force may occur to thee, and so thou mayest be hindered a long time from Communion and grow more and more unfit.

As quickly as ever thou canst, shake off from thyself all present heaviness and sloth, for it is of no use to continue long in disquietness, or to be going on long

with a disturbed conscience, and so for daily impediments to deprive thyself of the divine mysteries.

Yea, it is very hurtful to defer the Communion long, for this usually brings on heavy spiritual drowsiness.

Alas, some lukewarm undisciplined persons willingly put off their confession, and defer the Holy Communion, lest they should be engaged to keep a stricter watch over themselves.

5. O how poor and mean is their love, how weak their devotion, who so easily put off the Holy Communion !

How happy is he, and how acceptable to God, who so ordereth his life, and in such purity keepeth his conscience, that he is prepared and well-disposed to communicate even every day, if he were permitted, and if it might be done without observation.

If a person do sometimes abstain out of humility or by reason of some lawful cause, he is to be commended for his reverence.

But if a spiritual drowsiness have crept over him, he must bestir himself and do what lieth in him, and the Lord will assist his desire for the good will he hath thereto, which is what God doth chiefly respect.

6. But when any lawful hindrance doth happen, he

will yet always have a good will and a pious intention to communicate, and so shall he not lose the fruit of this sacrament.

For any devout person may every day and every hour profitably and without restraint draw near to Christ in Spiritual Communion.

And yet on certain days and at times appointed, he ought to receive sacramentally, with affectionate reverence, the body and blood of his Redeemer, and rather seek the honor and glory of God than his own comfort.

For he communicateth mystically and is invisibly refreshed as often as he devoutly calleth to mind the mystery of the incarnation and the passion of Christ, and is inflamed with the love of Him.

7. He that prepareth not himself except only when a festival draweth near or when custom compelleth him thereunto, shall too often be unprepared.

Blessed is he that offereth up himself as a holocaust to the Lord, as often as he doth celebrate or receive the Holy Communion.

Be not too slow nor yet hurried in celebrating, but keep the accustomed manner of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to be tedious and troublesome

to others, but to observe the received custom, according to the appointment of our fathers, and rather yield thyself up to the edification of others than to thine own devotion or inclination.

CHAPTER XI

That the Body of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are most
Necessary to a Faithful Soul

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O BLESSED Lord JESUS, how great is the happiness of a devout soul that feasteth with thee in thy banquet, where there is set no other food to be eaten but thyself, the only Beloved, and most to be desired above all the desires of the heart !

And verily it would be a sweet thing unto me in thy presence to pour out tears from the very bottom of my heart, and with the devout Magdalene to wash thy feet with tears.

But where now is that devotion, where that plentiful effusion of holy tears ?

Surely in the sight of thee and thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and to weep for joy.

For in this sacrament I have thee truly present, though hidden under another form.

2. For to behold thee in thine own divine brightness mine eyes would not be able to endure, nor could even the whole world stand in the splendor of the glory of thy majesty.

Herein then dost thou have regard to my weakness, that thou dost veil thyself under this outward sacramental sign.

Him I do really possess and adore whom the angels adore in heaven ; but I as yet by faith, they by sight and without a veil.

I ought to be content with the light of true faith and to walk therein, until the day of everlasting brightness dawn and the shadows of figures pass away.

But when that which is perfect is come the use of sacraments shall cease, because the blessed in their heavenly glory need not any sacramental remedy.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face, and being transformed from glory to glory into His image, they taste

the WORD of God made flesh, as He was from the beginning, and remaineth forever.

3. Whilst I am mindful of these wonderful things, every spiritual comfort becometh tedious unto me, because so long as I behold not my Lord openly in His own glory, I make no account at all of whatsoever I see or hear in this world.

Thou art witness unto me, O God, that nothing can comfort me, no creature can give me rest, but thou only, my God, whom I long to contemplate everlastingly.

But this is not possible so long as I linger in this mortal life.

Therefore I must dispose myself to much patience and submit myself to thee in all my desires.

For even thy saints, O Lord, who now rejoice with thee in the kingdom of heaven, whilst they lived waited in faith and in great patience for the coming of thy glory.

What they believed, I believe also ; what they hoped for, I hope for ; whither they are arrived, I trust I shall arrive by thy grace.

In the meantime I will walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of the saints.

I have also holy books for my comfort and for the

glass of my life ; and above all these, thy most holy body for a remedy and refuge.

4. For I perceive two things to be particularly necessary for me in this life, without which it would be insupportable to me.

Whilst I am detained in the prison of this body, I acknowledge myself to stand in need of two things — namely, food and light.

Unto me, then, thus weak and helpless, thou hast given thy sacred body for the refreshment both of my soul and body, and thy word thou hast set as a lamp to my feet.

Without these two I should not be able to live, for the word of God is the light of my soul and thy sacrament the bread of life.

These also may be called the two tables, set on the one side and on the other, in the treasury of holy Church.

One table is that of the sacred altar, having the holy bread, that is, the precious body of Christ ; the other is that of the divine law, containing holy doctrine, teaching men the right faith, and steadily conducting them forward beyond the veil, where is the holy of holies.

Thanks be to thee, O Lord JESUS, Light of eternal Light, for that table of holy doctrine which thou hast

prepared for us by thy servants, the prophets and apostles and other teachers.

5. Thanks be to thee, O thou Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who, to manifest thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper, wherein thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but thine own most sacred body and blood, rejoicing all the faithful with this holy banquet and replenishing them to the full with the cup of salvation, in which are all the delights of paradise ; and the holy angels do feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

6. O how great and honorable is the office of priests, to whom it is given with sacred words to consecrate the Lord of majesty ; with their lips to bless, with their hands to hold, with their own mouth to receive, and also to administer to others !

O how clean ought those hands to be, how pure that mouth, how holy that body, how unspotted that heart, where the Author of purity so often entereth !

Nothing but what is holy, no word but what is good and profitable, ought to proceed from the mouth of him who so often receiveth this sacrament of Christ.

7. Simple and chaste should be those eyes that are wont to behold the body of Christ ; the hands should

be pure and lifted up to heaven that touch the Creator of heaven and earth.

Unto the priest especially it is said in the law, — Be you holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

8. O Almighty God, do thou assist us with thy grace, that we who have undertaken the office of the priesthood may be able to serve thee worthily and devoutly, in all purity and with a good conscience.

And if we live not in so great innocency as we ought, grant to us at least duly to lament the sins which we have committed ; and in the spirit of humility, and with the full purpose of a good will, to serve thee more earnestly for the time to come.

CHAPTER XII

That *He who is about to communicate* ought to prepare himself
for *Christ with Great Diligence*

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

I AM the lover of purity and the giver of all sanctity. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

Make ready for me a large upper room° furnished, and I will keep the pasch with thee together with my disciples.

If thou wilt have me come unto thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven and make clean the habitation of thy heart.

Shut out the whole world and all the tumult of sin ; sit like a sparrow solitary on the house-top, and think over thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul.

For every one that loveth will prepare the best and fairest place for his beloved ; for herein is known the affection of him that entertaineth his beloved.

2. Know thou, notwithstanding, that the merit of no action of thine is able to make this preparation sufficient, although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together and have nothing else in thy mind.

But it is out of my grace and favor that thou art permitted to come to my table, as if a beggar were invited to a rich man's dinner, and he had no other return to make to him for his benefits but to humble himself and give thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently, not for custom, not for necessity ; but with fear and reverence

and affection receive the body of thy beloved Saviour when He vouchsafeth to come to thee.

I am He that hath called thee, I have commanded it to be done, I will supply what is wanting in thee; come thou and receive me.

3. When I bestow on thee the grace of devotion,^o give thanks to thy God, not because thou art worthy, but because I have had mercy on thee.

If thou have not devotion, but rather dost feel thyself dry, be instant in prayer, sigh and knock, and give not over until thou have received some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou hast need of me, I have no need of thee.

Neither comest thou to sanctify me, but I come to sanctify and perfect thee.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by me and united to me, that thou mayest receive new grace and be stirred up anew to amendment of life.

Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and receive thy beloved into thy soul.

4. But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself to devotion before Communion, but carefully also to preserve thyself therein after thou hast received this sacrament.

Nor is the careful guard of thyself afterwards less required than devout preparation before.

For a good guard afterwards is the best preparation for the obtaining of greater grace.

For if a person gives himself up at once too much to outward consolations, he is rendered thereby greatly indisposed to devotion.

Beware of much talk, remain in secret and enjoy thy God; for thou hast Him whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am He to whom thou oughtest wholly to give up thyself, that so thou mayest now live the rest of thy time not in thyself but in me, and be free from all anxious care.

CHAPTER XIII

That the Devout Soul ought fervently to seek Union with Christ
in this Sacrament

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHO will give me, O Lord, to find thee alone, to open unto thee my whole heart and to enjoy thee even as my soul desireth, that henceforth none may look upon me, nor any creature move me, nor

have regard to me ; but that thou alone mayest speak unto me and I to thee as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved and a friend to talk with his friend.

This I beg, this I long for, that I may be wholly united to thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things and may learn more and more by means of the Holy Communion and often celebrating, to relish things heavenly and eternal.

Ah, Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to thee and absorbed by thee and become altogether forgetful of myself ?

Thou in me and I in thee ; so also grant that we may both continue together in one.

2. Verily, thou art my beloved, the choicest amongst thousands, in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life.

Verily, thou art my peacemaker, in whom is highest peace and true rest ; out of whom is labor and sorrow and infinite misery.

Verily, thou art a hidden God, and thy counsel is not with the wicked, but thy conversation is with the humble and simple.

O how sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, who, to the end thou mightest show forth thy sweetness toward thy

children, dost vouchsafe to feed them with the bread which is full of all sweetness, even that which cometh down from heaven.

Surely there is no other nation so great that hath God so nigh, as thou our God art present to all thy faithful ones, unto whom, for their daily comfort and for the raising up of their hearts to heaven, thou givest thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

3. For what other nation is there of such high renown as the Christian people?

Or what creature under heaven is there so beloved as the devout soul, into which God himself entereth, to nourish it with His glorious flesh!

Oh, unspeakable grace! Oh, admirable condescension!

Oh, immeasurable love, specially bestowed on man!

But what return shall I make to the Lord for this grace, for love so boundless?

There is nothing that I am able to present more acceptable than to offer my heart wholly to my God and to unite it closely to Him.

Then shall my inner self rejoice, when my soul shall be perfectly united to God.

Then will He say to me, — If thou art willing to be with me, I am willing to be with thee.

And I will answer Him, — Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, for I will gladly be with thee. This is my whole desire, that my heart be united unto thee.

CHAPTER XIV

*Of the Feruent Desire of Some Devout Persons to receive the
Body of Christ*

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O HOW great is the abundance of thy sweetness,
O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that
fear thee !

When I call to mind some devout persons who approach to this thy sacrament, O Lord, with the greatest devotion and affection, I am oftentimes confounded and blush within myself that I come with such lukewarmness, yea, coldness, to thine altar and the table of Holy Communion.

I grieve that I remain so dry and without hearty affection, that I am not wholly inflamed in thy presence,

O my God, and not so earnestly drawn and affected as many devout persons have been.

For there have been some who, out of a vehement desire of the Holy Communion and strong affection of heart, could not restrain themselves from weeping; but with desire, both of soul and body, earnestly longed after thee, O God, the fountain of life, not being otherwise able to allay or satisfy their hunger but by receiving thy body and blood with all delight and spiritual eagerness.

2. O the truly ardent faith of such is a convincing proof of thy sacred presence.

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart within them so vehemently burneth whilst thou, O blessed JESUS, dost walk and converse with them.

Such affection and devotion as this, love and fervor so vehement, are too often far from me.

Be thou kind to me, O merciful JESUS, sweet and gracious Lord, and grant to me, thy poor needy creature, sometimes at least in this Holy Communion, to feel if it be but a small portion of the love of thy loving heart that my faith may become more strong, my hope in thy goodness may be increased, and that charity once

perfectly kindled within me after the tasting of this heavenly manna, may never smoulder.

3. For thy mercy is able to grant me the grace which I long for, and, in the day when it shall please thee, to visit me most mercifully with the spirit of fervor.

For although I burn not with such vehement desire as those who are so specially devoted to thee, yet notwithstanding, by thy grace, I long for this great and burning desire, praying from the heart that I may participate with all such fervent lovers and be numbered in their holy company.

CHAPTER XV

That the Grace of Devotion is obtained by Humility and
Self-denial

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion frequently, to ask it earnestly, to wait for it with patience and confidence, to receive it with thankfulness, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently and to

commit the term and manner of this heavenly visitation to God until it shall please Him to come unto thee.

Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion, and yet not to be too much dejected nor to grieve inordinately.

God often giveth in one short moment that which He for a long time hath denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end that which in the beginning of thy prayer He deferred to grant.

2. If grace were always promptly given and ever present at will, weak man could not well bear it.

Therefore the grace of devotion is to be waited for with good hope and humble patience.

Nevertheless, do thou impute it to thyself and to thine own sins, when this grace is not given thee or when it is secretly taken away.

It is sometimes but a small matter that hindereth and hideth grace from us, if that may be called small and not rather a weighty matter which hindereth so great a good.

But if thou remove this obstacle, be it great or small, and perfectly overcome it, thou shalt have thy desire.

3. For as soon as thou givest thyself to God with thy whole heart and seekest neither this nor that ac-

cording to thine own pleasure or will, but settlest thyself wholly in Him, thou shalt find thyself united to Him and at peace; for nothing can afford so sweet a relish, nothing can be so delightful, as the good pleasure of the divine will.

Whosoever therefore with a single heart, lifteth up his intention to God and keepeth himself clear of all inordinate love or dislike of any created thing, shall be the most fit to receive grace and meet for the gift of true devotion.

For the Lord bestoweth His blessings where He findeth the vessels empty.

And the more perfectly a man forsaketh things below, and the more he dieth to himself by contempt of himself, the more speedily shall grace come and shall enter in the more plentifully and shall lift up the free heart higher.

4. Then shall he see and abound and wonder, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, because the hand of the Lord is with him and he hath put himself wholly into his hand, even for ever and ever.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeketh God with his whole heart and receiveth not his soul in vain.

This man, in receiving the Holy Eucharist, obtaineth the great favor of divine union ; for he looketh not to his own devotion and consolation, but above all devotion and consolation to the honor and glory of God.

CHAPTER XVI

That we ought to lay open our Necessities to Christ and crave
His Grace

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O THOU most sweet and loving Lord, whom I now desire to receive with all devotion, thou knowest my infirmities and the necessities which I endure, in how many sins and evils I am involved, how often I am weighed down, tempted, troubled, and defiled.

Unto thee I come for remedy, I entreat of thee consolation and support.

I speak to thee who knowest all things, to whom all my inward thoughts are open and who alone canst perfectly comfort and help me.

Thou knowest what good things I stand in most need of, and how poor I am in virtue.

2. Behold, I stand before thee poor and naked, calling for grace and imploring mercy.

Refresh thy hungry supplicant, inflame my coldness with the fire of thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of thy presence.

Turn thou for me all earthly things into bitterness, all things grievous and contrary into patience, all low and created into contempt and oblivion.

Lift up my heart to thee in heaven and do not send me away to wander over the earth.

Be thou alone sweet unto me from henceforth for evermore; for thou alone art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

3. O that with thy presence thou wouldst wholly inflame, burn, and transform me into thyself, that I might be made one spirit with thee by the grace of inward union and by the melting of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go away from thee hungry and dry, but deal mercifully with me as oftentimes thou hast dealt wonderfully with thy saints.

What marvel is it if I should be wholly inflamed by thee, and die to myself since thou art a fire always

burning and never smouldering, a love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

CHAPTER XVII

Of Fervent Love and Vehement Desire to receive Christ

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WITH deep devotion and ardent love, with all affection and fervor of heart, I desire to receive thee, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons have desired thee when they were partakers of thy Holy Communion, who in holiness of life were to thee most pleasing and in devotion were most fervent.

O my God, my everlasting love, my whole good, my never-ending happiness, I desire to receive thee with the most earnest affection and the most worthy awe and reverence that any of the saints ever had or could feel toward thee.

2. And although I be unworthy to entertain all those feelings of devotion, nevertheless I offer unto

thee the whole affection of my heart as if I alone had all these most delightful burning desires.

Yea, and all that a dutiful mind can conceive and desire do I, with the deepest reverence and most inward affection, offer and present unto thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most cheerfully to sacrifice unto thee myself and all that is mine.

O Lord my God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I desire to receive thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise, and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness, and love, with such faith, hope, and purity, as thy most holy mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired thee, when, to the angel who declared unto her glad tidings of the mystery of the incarnation, she humbly and devoutly answered, — Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.°

3. And as thy blessed forerunner, the most excellent among the saints, John the Baptist, rejoicing in thy presence, leaped for joy of the Holy Ghost whilst he was yet shut up in his mother's womb ; and afterwards seeing JESUS walking among men, humbled himself very greatly, and said with devout affection, — The friend

of the bridegroom that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the voice of the bridegroom^o; in like manner I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to offer myself up to thee with my whole heart.

Wherefore also I offer and present unto thee the triumphant joys, the fervent affections, the ecstasies, the supernatural illuminations and celestial visions of all devout hearts, with all the virtues and praises ever celebrated by all creatures in heaven and on earth, for myself, and for all such as are recommended to my prayers; that by all thou mayest worthily be praised and forever glorified.

4. Receive, O Lord my God, my promises and desires of giving thee infinite praise and boundless blessing, which, according to the measure of thine ineffable greatness, are most justly due to thee.

These praises I now render unto thee, and long to render them every day and every moment. And with prayer and affection, I invite and beseech all the heavenly spirits and all the faithful to render with me thanks and praises to thee.

5. Let all people, tribes, and tongues praise thee and magnify thy sweet and holy name with the highest joy and ardent devotion.

And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate thy most holy sacrament and receive it with full faith, be accounted worthy to find grace and mercy at thy hands and to pray with humble supplication in behalf of me a sinner.

And when they shall have attained to their desired devotion and joyful union with thee, and shall have departed from thy holy heavenly table comforted and marvellously refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember my poor soul.

CHAPTER XVIII

That a Man be not a Curious Searcher into this Sacrament, but a Humble Follower of Christ, submitting Senses to Faith

THOU oughtest to beware of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound sacrament, if thou wilt not be plunged into the depths of doubt.

He that is a searcher into majesty shall be overwhelmed by its glory.

God is able to do more than man can understand.

A pious and humble inquiry after the truth is allowable, provided we be always ready to be taught and study to walk in the sound doctrine of the Church.

2. Blessed is that simplicity which leaveth the difficult ways of questions and disputings, and goeth forward in the plain and sure path of God's commandments.

Many have lost devotion whilst they sought to search into high things.

Faith is required of thee, and a sincere life; not height of understanding nor deep delving into the mysteries of God.

If thou dost not understand nor conceive the things that are beneath thee, how shalt thou be able to comprehend those which are above thee?

Submit thyself unto God and humble thy senses to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee in such degree as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

3. Some are grievously tempted about faith and this sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to themselves, but rather to the enemy.

Be not thou anxious herein; do not dispute with thine own thoughts, nor give any answer to doubts suggested by the devil; but believe the words of God,

trust His saints and prophets, and the wicked enemy will flee from thee.

It oftentimes is very profitable to the servant of God to endure such things.

For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, whom he already securely possesseth, but faithful and religious persons he in various ways tempteth and vexeth.

4. Go forward therefore with simple and undoubting faith, and with the reverence of a suppliant approach this sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, commit without care to Almighty God.

God deceiveth thee not; he is deceived that trusteth too much to himself.

God walketh with the simple, revealeth Himself to the humble, giveth understanding to little ones, and discloseth His meaning to pure minds; but He hideth His grace from the curious and proud.

Human reason is feeble and may be deceived, but true faith cannot be deceived.

5. All reason and natural search ought to follow faith, not go before it nor oppose it.

For faith and love do here specially take the lead

and work in hidden ways in this most holy and supremely excellent sacrament.

God, who is eternal and incomprehensible and of infinite power, doth things great and unsearchable in heaven and on earth, and there is no tracing out of His marvellous works.

If the works of God were such that they might be easily comprehended by human reason, they could not be justly called wonderful or unspeakable.

THE FOURTH BOOK
OF INTERIOR CONSOLATION

CHAPTER I

Of the Interior Speech of Christ to the Faithful Soul

I WILL hearken to what the Lord God will speak within me.

Blessed is the soul which heareth the Lord speaking within her and receiveth from His mouth the word of consolation.

Blessed are the ears that gladly receive the accents of the Divine whisper and give no heed to the whisperings of this world.

Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not to the voice sounding without, but to the truth teaching within.

Blessed are the eyes which are shut to outward things, but intent on things interior.

Blessed are they that enter far into inward things, and endeavor to prepare themselves more and more, by daily exercises, for the receiving of heavenly secrets.

Blessed are they who are glad to have time to spare for God, and who shake off all worldly hindrances.

2. Consider these things, O my soul, and shut up the door of thy sensual desires, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God shall speak in thee.

Thus saith thy beloved, — I am thy salvation, thy peace, and thy life ; keep thyself with me and thou shalt find peace.

Let go all transitory things and seek those that are eternal.

What are all temporal things but snares ? And what can all creatures avail thee if thou be forsaken by the Creator ?

Bid farewell therefore to all things else and labor to please thy Creator, and to be faithful unto him, that so thou mayest be able to attain unto true blessedness.

CHAPTER II

That the Truth speaketh within us without Noise of Words

SPEAK, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

I am thy servant ; grant me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

Incline my heart to the words of thy mouth ; let thy speech distil as the dew.

The children of Israel in times past said unto Moses, — Speak thou to us and we will hear ; let not the Lord speak to us lest we die.°

Not so, O Lord, not so, I beseech thee ; but rather, with the prophet Samuel,° I humbly and earnestly entreat, — Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets ; but rather do thou speak, O Lord God, the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets ; for thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without thee can profit me nothing.

2. They indeed may utter words, but they cannot give the spirit.

Most beautifully do they speak ; but if thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They teach the letter, but thou openest the sense ; they bring forth mysteries, but thou unlockest the meaning of sealed things.

They declare thy commandments, but thou helpest us to keep them.

They point out the way, but thou givest strength for the journey.

They work only outwardly, but thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water, but thou givest the increase.

They cry aloud in words, but thou impartest understanding to the hearer.

3. Let not Moses therefore speak unto me, but thou, O Lord my God, the eternal Truth, lest I die and prove fruitless if I be warned but outwardly, and not inflamed within ;

Lest the word heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not obeyed, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak therefore, Lord, for thy servant heareth ; for thou hast the words of eternal life.

Speak thou unto me, for the comfort, however im-

perfect, of my soul, and for the amendment of my whole life, and for thy praise and glory and honor everlasting.

CHAPTER III

*That the Words of God are to be heard with Humility, and that
Many weigh them Not°*

MY son, hear my words, words of greatest sweetness, surpassing all the learning of the philosophers and wise men of this world.

My words are spirit and life, and not to be weighed by the understanding of man.

They are not to be drawn forth for vain approbation, but to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection.

AND I said, Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach out of thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from evil days and that he be not desolate upon the earth.

2. I TAUGHT the prophets from the beginning, saith the Lord, and cease not, even to this day, to speak to all ; but many are hardened and deaf to my voice.

Most men more willingly listen to the world than to God ; they sooner follow the desires of their own flesh than God's good pleasure.

The world promiseth temporal and trivial things, and is served with great eagerness ; I promise things great and eternal, and yet the hearts of men remain torpid.

Who is there that in all things serveth and obeyeth me with so great care as the world and its lords are served withal ? Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.^o And if thou ask the cause, hear wherefore.

For a small reward men run a long way ; for everlasting life many will scarce lift a foot from the ground.

The most pitiful gain is sought after, for a single bit of money sometimes there is shameful contention, for a vain matter and slight promise men fear not to toil day and night.

3. But, alas, for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honor and glory without end, they grudge even the least fatigue.

Be ashamed therefore, thou slothful and complaining servant, that they are found to be more ready unto destruction than thou unto life.

They rejoice more in vanity than thou dost in the truth.

Sometimes, indeed, they are frustrated in their hopes ; but my promise deceiveth none, nor sendeth him away empty that trusteth in me.

What I have promised, I will give ; what I have said, I will fulfil, if only any man remain faithful in my love even to the end.

I am the rewarder of all good men and the strong approver of all who are devoted to me.

4. Write thou my words in thy heart and meditate diligently on them, for in time of temptation they will be very needful for thee.

What thou understandest not when thou readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.°

In two ways I am wont to visit mine elect, namely, with trials and with consolation.

And I daily read two lessons to them ; one in reprov-
ing their vices, another in exhorting them to the in-
crease of virtues.

He that hath my words and despiseth them, hath one that shall judge him in the last day.

5. *A Prayer to implore the grace of Devotion.*

O Lord my God ! Thou art all my good, and who am I that I should dare speak to thee ?

I am thy poorest, meanest servant, and a most vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can or dare express.

Yet do thou remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy. Thou canst do all things, thou surpasseth all things, thou fillest all things ; only the sinner thou leavest empty.

Remember thy tender mercies, and fill my heart with thy grace, thou who wilt not that thy works should be void and in vain.

6. How can I bear this miserable life, unless thou strengthen me with thy mercy and grace ?

Turn not thy face away from me, delay not thy visitation, withdraw not thy consolation, lest my soul become as earth without water before thee.

Teach me, O Lord, to do thy will ; teach me to live worthily and humbly in thy sight, for thou art my wisdom who dost know me in truth, and didst know me before the world was made and before I was born into the world.

CHAPTER IV

That we ought to walk in Truth and Humility before God

MY Son, walk thou before me in truth, and ever seek me in the simplicity of thy heart.

He that walketh before me in truth shall be defended from the assaults of evil, and the truth shall set him free from the wiles and slanders of unjust men.

If the truth shall make thee free, thou shalt be free indeed and shalt not care for the vain words of men.

O Lord, it is true ; according as thou sayest, I beseech thee let it be with me ; let thy truth teach me, guard me and preserve me safe to the end.

Let it set me free from all evil affection and inordinate love, and I shall walk with thee in great freedom of heart.

2. I will teach thee, saith the Truth, those things which are right and pleasing in my sight.

Reflect on thy sins with great displeasure and grief, and never esteem thyself to be anything because of thy good works.

In truth thou art a sinner, subject to many passions and entangled therein.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing ; speedily art thou cast down, speedily overcome, speedily disordered, speedily undone.

Thou hast naught whereof to glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to account thyself vile ; for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend.

3. And therefore let nothing seem much to thee, whatsoever thou doest.

Let nothing seem great, nothing precious and wonderful, nothing worthy of estimation, nothing high, nothing truly commendable or desirable, but that alone which is eternal.

Let the eternal truth be above all things pleasing to thee ; let thine own extreme unworthiness be always displeasing to thee.

Fear nothing, blame nothing, flee nothing so much as thy vices and sins, which ought to be more displeasing to thee than any losses whatsoever of things earthly.

Some men walk not sincerely in my sight, but out of curiosity and pride desire to know my secrets and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These oftentimes, for their pride and curiosity fall into great temptations and sins; for I am against them.

4. Fear thou the judgments of God and dread the wrath of the Almighty. Discuss not thou the works of the Most High, but search diligently thine own iniquities, in how great things thou hast offended and how many good things thou hast neglected.

Some carry their devotion only in books, some in pictures, some in outward signs and figures.

Some have me on their lips, but little in their hearts.

Others there are who, being illuminated in their understandings and purged in their affection, do always pant after things eternal, are unwilling to hear of the things of this world, and serve the necessities of nature with grief; and these perceive what the Spirit of Truth speaketh in them.

For He teacheth them to despise things earthly, and to love heavenly things; to neglect the world and to desire heaven all the day and night.

CHAPTER V

Of the Wonderful Effects of Divine Love

I BLESS thee, O Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord JESUS Christ, for that thou hast vouchsafed to remember me a poor creature.

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, thanks be unto thee who sometimes with thy comfort refreshest me, unworthy as I am of all comfort.

I will continually bless and glorify thee, with thine only begotten Son and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, for ever and ever.

Ah, Lord God, thou holy lover of my soul, when thou comest into my heart all that is within me shall rejoice.

Thou art my glory and the exultation of my heart ; thou art my hope and refuge in the day of my tribulation.

2. But because I am as yet weak in love and imperfect in virtue, I have need to be strengthened and comforted by thee ; visit me therefore often, and instruct me in thy holy discipline.

Set me free from evil passions, and cleanse my heart

of all inordinate affections, that, being inwardly cured and thoroughly purified, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere.

3. Love is an excellent thing, yea, a great and thorough good ; by itself it maketh everything that is heavy, light ; and it beareth evenly all that is uneven.

For it carrieth a burden which is no burden, and maketh every thing that is bitter, sweet and savory.

The noble love of JESUS impelleth a man to do great things and stirreth him up to be always longing for what is more perfect.

Love tendeth upward, and will not be kept back by anything low and mean.

Love seeketh to be free and estranged from all worldly affections, that so its inward sight may not be hindered, that it may not be entangled by any temporal prosperity or subdued by any adversity.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller nor better in heaven and earth ; because love is born of God, and can rest in naught but God, above all created things.

4. The lover flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth ; he is free and is not bound.

He giveth all for all and hath all in all, because he resteth in One Highest above all things, from whom all that is good floweth and proceedeth.

He respecteth not the gifts, but turneth himself above all goods unto the giver.

Love oftentimes knoweth no bounds, but is fervent beyond all measure.

Love feeleth no burden, thinketh nothing of trouble, attempteth what is above its strength, pleadeth no excuse of impossibility ; for it thinketh all things lawful for itself and all things possible.

It is therefore able to undertake all things, and it completeth many things and bringeth them to a conclusion, where he who loveth not fainteth and lieth down.

5. Love watcheth, and sleeping slumbereth not.

Though weary, love is not tired ; though straitened, it is not constrained ; though alarmed, it is not confounded ; but as a lively flame and burning torch, it forceth its way upwards and securely surpasseth all.

If any man love, he knoweth what is the cry of this voice. For it is a loud cry in the ears of God, this ardent affection of the soul which saith, — My God, my Love, thou art all mine and I am all thine.

6. Enlarge thou me in love that with the inward

palate of my heart I may taste how sweet it is to love and to be dissolved, and as it were to bathe myself in thy love.

Let me be possessed by love, mounting above myself through excessive fervor and ecstasy.

Let me sing the canticle of love, let me follow thee, my Beloved, on high ; let my soul spend itself in thy praise, rejoicing through love.

Let me love thee more than myself and love myself only for thee, and in thee let me love all that truly love thee, as the law of love commandeth, shining but from thee.

7. Love is active, sincere, affectionate, pleasant, and amiable ; courageous, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and never seeking itself.

For in whatever instance a person seeketh himself, there he falleth from love.

Love is circumspect, humble, and upright ; not yielding to softness or to levity, nor attending to vain things ; it is sober, chaste, steady, quiet, and guarded in all the senses.

Love is submissive and obedient to its superiors ; unto itself mean and despised, unto God devout and thankful, trusting and hoping always in Him, even when

God imparteth no relish of sweetness unto it; for without sorrow no one liveth in love.

8. He that is not prepared to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover.

A lover ought to embrace willingly all that is hard and distasteful for the sake of his Beloved, and not to turn away from Him on account of any contradictions.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Proof of a True Lover

MY son, thou art not yet a courageous and considerate lover.

WHEREFORE sayest thou this, O Lord?

BECAUSE for a slight opposition thou givest over thy undertakings and too eagerly seekest consolation.

A courageous lover standeth firm in temptations and giveth no credit to the crafty persuasions of the enemy. As I please him in prosperity, so in adversity I am not displeasing to him.

2. A wise lover regardeth not so much the gift of the lover, as the love of the giver.

He esteemeth the good will rather than the value of the gift, and setteth all gifts below him whom he loveth.

A noble-minded lover resteth not in the gift, but in me above every gift.

All therefore is not lost if sometimes thou hast not that feeling of devotion towards me or my saints that thou wouldest have.

That good and sweet affection which thou sometimes feelest is the effect of grace present and a sort of fore-taste of thy heavenly home; but thou must not lean on it too much, for it cometh and goeth.

But to strive against evil thoughts which may befall thee and to reject with scorn the suggestions of the devil, is a notable sign of virtue and shall have great reward.

3. Let no strange fancies therefore trouble thee, which on any subject whatever may crowd into thy mind. Keep thy purpose with courage and preserve an upright intention towards God.

Neither is it an illusion that sometimes thou art suddenly rapt on high and presently returnest again unto the accustomed vanities of thy heart.

For these evils thou dost rather unwillingly suffer than commit ; and so long as they displease thee, and thou strivest against them, it is matter of reward and not of loss.

4. Know that the old enemy doth strive by all means to hinder thy desire for good, and to divert thee from all religious exercises ; particularly, from the veneration of the saints, from devout meditation on my passion, from the profitable remembrance of thy sins, from the guarding of thine own heart and from the firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

Many evil thoughts doth he suggest to thee, that so he may cause a weariness and horror in thee to call thee back from prayer and holy reading.

Humble confession is displeasing unto him, and if he could he would cause thee to omit Holy Communion.

Trust him not nor heed him, although he should often set snares of deceit to entrap thee.

Charge him with it when he suggesteth evil and unclean thoughts unto thee ; say unto him, —

Away, thou unclean spirit ! Blush, thou miserable wretch ! Most unclean art thou that bringest such things unto mine ears.

Begone from me, thou wicked seducer ! Thou shalt

have no part in me ; but JESUS shall be with me as a strong warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

I had rather die, and undergo any torment, than consent unto thee.

Hold thy peace and be silent ; I will hear thee no more, though thou shouldst work me many troubles. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ?

Though armies should stand together against me, yet should not my heart be afraid. The Lord is my helper and my Redeemer.

5. Fight like a good soldier ; and if thou sometimes fall though frailty, rise again with greater strength than before, trusting in my more abundant grace ; and take great heed of vain pleasing of thyself, and of pride.

Pride bringeth many into error and maketh them sometimes fall into blindness almost incurable.

Let the fall of the proud, thus foolishly presuming on their own strength, serve thee for a warning and keep thee ever humble.

CHAPTER VII

That Grace is to be guarded by Humility

MY son, it is more profitable for thee and safer to conceal the grace of devotion, not to be elated nor to speak much thereof, nor to dwell much thereon ; but rather to despise thyself and to fear lest the grace have been given to one unworthy of it.

This affection thou must not too earnestly cleave to, for it may be quickly changed to the contrary.

Think when thou art in grace how miserable and needy thou art wont to be without grace.

Nor is it in this only that thy progress in spiritual life consists, that thou hast the grace of consolation ; but rather that with humility, self-denial, and patience thou endurest the withdrawing thereof ; provided thou do not then become listless in the exercise of prayer, nor suffer the rest of thy accustomed duties to be at all neglected.

Rather do thou cheerfully perform what lieth in thee according to the best of thy power and understanding,

and do not wholly neglect thyself because of the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest.

2. For there are many who, when things succeed not well with them, presently become impatient or slothful.

For the way of man is not always in his power, but it belongeth unto God to give and to comfort, when He will and how much He will and whom He will, as it shall please Him and no more.

Some unadvised persons, by reason of their overearnest desire of the grace of devotion, have overthrown themselves, because they attempted more than they were able to perform, not weighing the measure of their own weakness but following the desire of their heart rather than the judgment of their reason.

And because they dwelt on greater matters than was pleasing to God, they therefore quickly lost His grace.

They who had built themselves nests in heaven were made helpless and vile outcasts, to the end that being humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to fly with their own wings but to trust to mine.

They that are yet but novices and inexperienced in the way of the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of discreet persons, may easily be deceived and overthrown.

3. And if they will rather follow their own notions than trust to others who are more experienced, their end will be dangerous, at least if they are unwilling to be drawn away from their own conceit.

It is seldom the case that they who are wise in their own conceit endure humbly to be governed by others.

Better is it to have but meagre learning with humility and a slender understanding, than great treasures of science with vain self-complacency.

Better it is for thee to have little, than much of that which may make thee proud.

He acts not very discreetly who wholly gives himself over to joy, forgetting his former helplessness and that chastened fear of the Lord which is afraid of losing proffered grace.

Nor again is he very valiantly wise who, in time of adversity or any heaviness, at once yieldeth too much to despairing thoughts, and thinketh of me less trustfully than he ought.

4. He who in time of peace is willing to be over secure shall be often found in time of war too much dejected and full of fears.

If thou couldest always continue humble and insignificant in thine own eyes and couldest thoroughly

moderate and govern thy spirit, thou wouldest not so quickly fall into danger and offence.

It is good counsel that when fervor of spirit is kindled within thee, thou shouldst consider how it will be when that light shall leave thee.

And when this happeneth, then remember that the light may return again which as a warning to thyself and for mine own glory, I have withdrawn for a time.

5. Such trials are oftentimes more profitable than if thou shouldst always have things prosper according to thy will.

For a man's worthiness is not to be estimated by the number of visions and comforts which he may have or by his skill in the Scriptures or by his being placed in high station.

But he hath great merit if he be grounded in true humility and is filled with divine charity, if he be always purely and sincerely seeking God's honor, if he think nothing of and unfeignedly despise himself and even rejoice more to be despised and made low by others than to be honored by them.

CHAPTER VIII

Of a Lowly Opinion of ourselves in the Sight of God

I WILL speak to my Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.

If I esteem myself to be anything more, behold thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true witness and I cannot contradict it.

But if I abase myself and reduce myself to nothing and shrink from all self-esteem and grind myself to the dust that I am, thy grace will be favorable to me and thy light near unto my heart, and all self-esteem, how little soever, shall be swallowed up in the valley of my nothingness and perish forever.

There thou showest thyself unto me what I am, what I have been and whither I am come ; for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I be left to myself, behold I become nothing but mere weakness ; but if thou for an instant look upon me, I am forthwith made strong and am filled with new joy.

And a great marvel it is that I am so suddenly lifted up and so graciously embraced by thee, who of mine own weight am always sinking downward.

2. Thy love is the cause hereof, freely preventing me and relieving me in so many necessities, guarding me also from pressing dangers and snatching me, as I may truly say, from evils out of number.

For indeed by loving myself amiss, I lost myself; and by seeking thee alone, and purely loving thee, I have found both myself and thee, and by that love have more deeply reduced myself to nothing.

Because thou, O dearest Lord, dealest with me above all desert and above all that I dare hope or ask.

3. Blessed be thou, my God; for although I be unworthy of any benefits, yet thy royal bounty and infinite goodness never cease to do good even to the ungrateful and to those who are turned away far from thee.

Turn thou us unto thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout; for thou art our salvation, our courage, and our strength.

CHAPTER IX

That All Things are to be referred to God, as to their Last End

MY son, I ought to be thy supreme and ultimate end if thou desire to be truly blessed.

By this intention thy affections will be purified which are too often inordinately inclined to selfishness and to creatures.

For if in any thing thou seekest thyself, immediately thou faintest and driest up.

I would therefore thou shouldst refer all things principally unto me, for I am He who have given all.

Consider every thing as flowing from the Highest Good, and therefore unto me as to their source all must be brought back.

2. From me, as from a living fountain, the small and the great, the poor and the rich, do draw the water of life ; and they that willingly and freely serve me shall receive grace for grace.

But he who would glory in things out of me or take pleasure in some private good, shall not be grounded in true joy nor be enlarged in his heart, but shall many ways be encumbered and straitened.

Thou oughtest therefore to ascribe nothing of good to thyself, nor attribute goodness unto any man, but give all unto God without whom man hath nothing.

I have given thee all, and my will is to have all again ; and with great strictness do I exact from thee a return of thanks.

3. This is the truth whereby vain glory is put to flight.

And if heavenly grace enter in and true charity, there will be no envy or narrowness of heart, neither will self-love busy itself.

For divine charity overcometh all things and enlargeth all the powers of the soul.

If thou rightly judge, thou wilt rejoice in me alone, in me alone thou wilt hope ; for none is good save God alone, who is to be praised above all things and in all things to be blessed.

CHAPTER X

That to despise the World and serve God is Sweet

NOW I will speak, O Lord, and will not be silent ; I will say in the ears of my God, my Lord, and my King who is on high : Oh, how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee.

But what art thou to those who love thee, what to those who serve thee with their whole heart ?

Truly unspeakable is the sweetness of contemplating thee which thou bestowest on them that love thee.

In this especially thou hast shown me the sweetness of thy love, that when I was not thou didst make me ; when I went far astray from thee thou broughtest me back again that I might serve thee, and that thou hast commanded me to love thee.

2. What shall I say concerning thee, O Fountain of everlasting love !

How can I forget thee, who hast vouchsafed to remember me, even after I had wasted away and perished ?

Thou hast shown mercy to thy servant beyond all

expectation, and hast exhibited favor and loving kindness beyond all desert.

What return shall I make to thee for this grace? For it is not granted to all to forsake all, to renounce the world, and to undertake the religious life.

Is it any great thing that I should serve thee whom the whole creation is bound to serve?

It ought not to seem much to me to serve thee, but rather this doth appear much to me and wonderful, that thou vouchsafest to receive into thy service one so poor and unworthy, and to make him one with thy beloved servants.

3. Behold, all things are thine which I have and whereby I serve thee.

And yet, contrariwise, thou rather servest me than I thee.

Behold, heaven and earth which thou hast created for the service of man are ready at hand and do daily perform whatever thou hast commanded.

And even this is little, for thou hast also appointed angels to minister to man.

But that which excelleth all is this, that thou thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man and hast promised that thou wouldst give thyself unto him.

4. What shall I give thee for all these thousands of benefits? I would I could serve thee all the days of my life.

I would I were able, at least for one day, to do thee some worthy service.

Truly thou art worthy of all service, of all honor and everlasting praise.

Truly thou art my Lord and I thy poor servant who am bound to serve thee with all my might ; neither ought I ever to be weary of praising thee.

And this I wish to do, this I desire ; and whatsoever is wanting in me, do thou, I beseech thee, vouchsafe to supply.

5. It is a great honor and a great glory to serve thee and to despise all things for thee.

For great grace shall be given to those who shall have willingly subjected themselves to thy most holy service.

They who for thy love shall have renounced all carnal delights, shall find the sweetest consolations of the Holy Ghost.

They shall attain great freedom of mind who for thy Name's sake enter into the narrow way and put aside all worldly care.

6. Oh sweet and delightful service of God, by which a man is made truly free and holy !

Oh sacred state of religious service, which maketh a man equal to the angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the devils, and worthy to be commended by all the faithful !

Oh welcome service and ever to be desired, in which we are rewarded with the greatest good and attain to endless joy.

CHAPTER XI

That the Desires of the Heart are to be Examined and Moderated

MY son, it behoveth thee to learn many things which thou hast not yet well learned.

WHAT are these, O Lord ?

THAT thou frame thy desires wholly according to my good pleasure, and that thou be not a lover of thyself but an earnest follower of my will.

Various longings and desires oftentimes inflame thee, and violently hurry thee on ; but do thou consider

whether thou be not moved rather for thine own advantage than for my honor.

If I be the cause, thou wilt be well content howsoever I shall ordain ; but if there lurk in thee any self-seeking, behold, this it is that hindereth thee and weigheth thee down.

2. Beware therefore thou lean not too much upon any desire conceived without asking my counsel, lest perhaps afterwards it repent thee or thou be displeased with that which at first pleased thee and which thou didst desire earnestly as the best.

For not every affection which seemeth good is immediately to be followed, nor on the other hand is every contrary affection at the first to be avoided.

It is sometimes expedient to use restraint even in good desires and inclinations, lest through unseasonable effort thou incur distraction of mind, lest by thy want of self-government thou beget a scandal unto others,^o or being by others thwarted and resisted, thou become suddenly confounded and so fall.

3. Sometimes thou must use violence and resist manfully thy sensual appetite, not regarding what the flesh would or would not, but rather taking pains that even unwillingly it be made subject to the spirit.

And so long ought it to be chastened and to be forced to remain under servitude, until it submit promptly in all things, and learn to be content with a little and to be pleased with what is plain and simple, and not to murmur against any inconvenience.

CHAPTER XII

Of Learning to be Patient and to strive against Concupiscence

O LORD my God, patience is very necessary for me, for I perceive that many things in this life fall out adversely.

For whatsoever plans I shall devise for my own peace, my life cannot be without war and affliction.

It is so, my son. But it is my will that thou seek not that peace which is void of temptations or which suffereth nothing contrary, but rather think that thou hast found peace when thou art exercised with sundry tribulations and tried in many adversities.

2. If thou say that thou art not able to suffer much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory?

Of two evils the less is always to be chosen. That thou mayest therefore avoid the everlasting punishment that is to come, endeavor to endure present evils patiently for God's sake.

Dost thou think that worldlings^o suffer nothing or but little? Ask even those who live most at ease, and thou shalt find it otherwise.

But thou wilt say they have many delights and follow their own wills, and therefore they do not much weigh their own afflictions.

Be it so that they have whatsoever they will; but how long dost thou think that it will last?

3. Behold, they who abound in this world shall vanish away like smoke, and there shall be no memory of their past joys.

Yea, even while they are yet alive, they do not rest in their pleasures without bitterness and weariness and fear.

For from the selfsame thing in which they delight they oftentimes receive the penalty of sorrow.

And it is but just that having inordinately sought and followed after pleasures, they should enjoy them not without shame and bitterness.

4. Oh, how brief, how false, how inordinate and base, are all those pleasures!

Yet so drunken and blinded are men that they understand it not, but like dumb beasts, for the poor enjoyment of a corruptible life, they incur the death of the soul.

Thou therefore, my son, follow not thy lusts, and turn away from thine own will. Delight in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart.

5. For if thou desire true happiness and more plentifully comfort from me, in the contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off all base delights shall be thy blessing, and abundant consolation shall be given thee.

And the more thou withdraw thyself from all solace of creatures, so much the sweeter and more powerful consolations shalt thou find in me.

But at first thou shalt not attain to them without sorrow and a laborious conflict.

Old inbred habit will for a time resist, but by a better habit it shall be entirely overcome.

The flesh will murmur against thee, but with fervor of spirit thou shalt bridle it.

The old serpent will tempt and trouble thee, but by prayer he shall be put to flight. Moreover also, by useful labor thou shalt bar the way against him.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Humble Obedience after the Example of Jesus Christ

MY son, he that endeavoreth to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraweth himself from grace ; and he who seeketh for himself private benefits, loseth those which are common.

He that doth not cheerfully and freely submit himself to his superior, showeth that his flesh is not as yet perfectly brought into subjection but oftentimes struggleth and murmureth against him.

Learn thou therefore quickly to submit thyself to thy superior, if thou desire to subdue thy flesh.

For more speedily is the outward enemy overcome if the inward man be not laid waste.

There is no worse enemy nor one more troublesome to the soul than thou art unto thyself, if thou be not in harmony with the spirit.

It is altogether necessary that thou conceive a true contempt for thyself, if thou desire to prevail against flesh and blood.

2. Because thou still lovest thyself inordinately thou art afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others.

And yet, what great matter is it if thou, who art but dust and nothing, subject thyself to a man for God's sake, when I, the Almighty and the Most High, who created all things out of nothing, humbly subjected myself to man for thy sake?

I became of all men the most humble and the most abject that thou mightest overcome thy pride with my humility.

Learn, O dust, to obey; learn to humble thyself, earth and clay, and to bow thyself down under the feet of all men.

Learn to break thine own will and to yield thyself to all subjection.

3. Be zealous against thyself and suffer no pride to dwell in thee, but show thyself so humble and so lowly that all may be able to walk over thee and to tread thee down as the mire of the streets.

Vain man, what hast thou to complain of?

What canst thou answer, vile sinner, to them that upbraid thee, thou who hast so often offended God and hast so many times deserved hell?

But mine eye spared thee because thy soul was

precious in my sight, that thou mightest know my love, and ever be thankful for my benefits; also that thou mightest continually give thyself to true subjection and humility and endure patiently to be despised.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Considering the Secret Judgments of God, lest we take Pride in our Good Deeds

THOU, O Lord, thunderest forth thy judgments over me, thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is very sore afraid.

I stand astonished; and I consider that the heavens are not pure in thy sight.

If in the angels thou didst find wickedness and didst not spare even them, what shall become of me?

Stars have fallen from heaven, and I, who am but dust, how can I presume?

They whose works seemed commendable have fallen into the lowest misery, and those who did eat the bread of angels I have seen delighting themselves with the husks of swine.

2. There is therefore no holiness if thou, O Lord, withdraw thine hand.

No wisdom availeth if thou cease to guide.

No courage helpeth if thou defend not.

No chastity is secure if thou do not protect it.

No vigilance of our own availeth if thy sacred watchfulness guard us not.

For if we be left by thee, we sink and perish ; but being visited by thee, we are raised up and live.

Truly we are inconstant, but by thee we are made steadfast ; we wax lukewarm, but by thee we are inflamed.

3. Oh, how humbly and meanly ought I to think of myself ! How ought I to esteem it as nothing, if I seem to have any good in me !

With what profound humility ought I to submit myself to thine unfathomable judgments, O Lord, where I find myself to be nothing else than nothing !

O weight immeasurable ! O sea impassable, where I discover nothing of myself save only and wholly nothing !

Where then can glorying hide itself, where can be trust in mine own virtue ?

All vainglorying is swallowed up in the deep of thy judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in thy sight ?

Shall the clay glory against Him that formed it ?

How can he be lifted up with vain words whose heart is truly subject to God ?

Not all the world will make him proud, whom the Truth hath subjected unto itself ; neither shall he who hath firmly settled his whole hope in God, be moved by the tongues of flatterers.

For even they themselves who speak, behold, they all are nothing, for they will pass away with the sound of their words ; but the truth of the Lord remaineth forever.

CHAPTER XV

IN EVERYTHING WHICH WE DESIRE, HOW WE OUGHT TO FEEL, AND WHAT WE OUGHT TO SAY

MY son, say thou thus in every thing, — Lord, if this be pleasing unto thee, so let it be.

Lord, if it be to thy honor, in thy name let this be done.

Lord, if thou see it to be expedient, and know it to

be profitable for me, then grant unto me that I may use this to thine honor.

But if thou know it will be hurtful unto me and of no profit to the health of my soul, take away the desire from me.

For not every desire proceedeth from the Holy Spirit, even though it seem unto a man right and good.

It is difficult to judge truly whether a good spirit or the contrary be urging thee to desire this or that, or whether by thine own spirit thou be moved thereunto.

Many have been deceived in the end who at the first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

2. Therefore whatsoever seemeth to be desirable must always be sought and prayed for in the fear of God and with humility of heart, and chiefly thou must commit the whole matter to me with special resignation of thyself; and thou must say, —

O Lord, thou knowest what is best for us; let this or that be done as thou pleasest.

Give what thou wilt and how much thou wilt and when thou wilt.

Deal with me as thou knowest, and as best pleaseth thee, and is most for thy honor.

Set me where thou wilt, and deal with me in all things as thou wilt.

I am in thy hand ; turn me round and turn me back again, as thou shalt please.

Behold, I am thy servant, prepared for all things ; for I desire not to live for myself, but for thee ; and oh, that I could do it worthily and perfectly !

A Prayer that the Will of God may be fulfilled

3. O MOST merciful JESUS, grant me thy grace, that it may be with me and work with me and continue with me even to the end.

Grant that I may always desire and will that which is most acceptable and pleasing in thy sight.

Let thy will be mine and let my will ever follow thine and agree perfectly with it.

Let my will be all one with thine, and let me not be able to will or not will but what thou willest or dost not will.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world and for thy sake love to be contemned and unknown.

Grant me above all things that I can desire, to desire

to rest in thee and in thee to have my heart at peace.

Thou art the true peace of the heart, thou art its only rest ; out of thee all things are full of trouble and difficulty. In this peace, that is, in thee, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep and take my rest. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XVI

That True Comfort is to be sought in God Alone

WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort, I look for not here but hereafter.

For if I alone should possess all the comforts of the world and might enjoy all the delights thereof, it is certain that they could not long endure.

Wherefore, O my soul, thou canst not have full comfort nor perfect delight except in God, the comforter of the poor and the helper of the humble.

Wait a little while, O my soul, wait for the divine promise, and thou shalt have abundance of all good things in heaven.

If thou desire beyond measure the things that are

present, thou shalt lose those which are heavenly and eternal.

Use temporal things but desire things eternal.

Thou canst not be satisfied with any temporal goods because thou art not created to enjoy them.

2. Although thou shouldst possess all created goods, yet couldst thou not be happy thereby nor blessed; but in God, who created all things, consisteth thy whole blessedness and felicity.

It is not such happiness as is seen and commended by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as the good and faithful servants of Christ wait for and of which the spiritual and pure in heart, whose conversation is in heaven, sometimes have a foretaste.

Vain and brief is all human consolation.

Blessed and true is the consolation which is received inwardly from the truth.

A devout man beareth everywhere about with him his own comforter, JESUS, and saith unto Him, — Be thou present with me, O Lord JESUS, in every time and place.

Let this be my consolation, to be willing to lack all human consolation.

And if thy comfort be wanting, let thy will and thy

just trial of me be as the greatest comfort ; for thou wilt not always be angry, neither wilt thou chide forever.

CHAPTER XVII

That All our Cares are to be rested on God

MY son, suffer me to do with thee what I please ; I know what is expedient for thee.

Thou thinkest as man ; thou judgest in many things as human affection persuadeth thee.

O LORD, what thou sayest is true. Thy care for me is greater than all the care that I can take for myself.

For he standeth but very unsafely who casteth not all his care upon thee.

O Lord, if only my will may remain right and firm towards thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please thee.

For it cannot be any thing but good, whatsoever thou shalt do with me.

2. If it be thy will that I should be in darkness, be thou blessed ; and if it be thy will that I should be in

light, be thou again blessed. If thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be thou blessed ; and if thou wilt have me afflicted, be thou yet equally blessed.

MY son, such as this ought to be thy state of mind if thou desire to walk with me.

Thou oughtest to be as ready to suffer as to rejoice.

Thou oughtest as cheerfully to be destitute and poor, as to be full and rich.

3. O LORD, for thy sake I will cheerfully suffer whatsoever shall come on me with thy permission.

From thy hand I am willing to receive indifferently good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow ; and for all that befalleth me I will be thankful.

Keep me safe from all sin, and I shall fear neither death nor hell.

So thou do not cast me off from thee forever nor blot me out of the book of life, what tribulation soever befalleth me shall not hurt me.

CHAPTER XVIII

*That Temporal Sufferings must be borne patiently, after the
Example of Christ*

MY son, I came down from heaven for thy salvation ; I took upon me thy sorrows, not necessity but love drawing me thereto, that thou thyself mightest learn patience and bear temporal sufferings without repining.

For from the hour of my birth even until my death on the cross, I was not without endurance of grief.

I suffered great want of things temporal, I often heard many murmurings against me, I endured patiently disgraces and revilings ; in return for benefits I received ingratitude, for miracles blasphemies, for heavenly doctrine reproofs.

2. O LORD, for that thou wert patient in thy lifetime, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of thy Father, it is reason that I, a most miserable sinner, should bear myself patiently according to thy will, and

for my soul's welfare endure the burden of this corruptible life as long as thou shalt choose.

For although this present life be burdensome, yet notwithstanding it is now by thy grace made very gainful, and by thine example and the footsteps of thy saints, more bright and clear and endurable to the weak.

It is also much more full of consolation than it was formerly under the old law when the gates of heaven remained shut, and the way also to heaven seemed more dark, when so few cared to seek after the kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, they who then were just and such as should be saved could not enter into the heavenly kingdom before the accomplishment of thy passion and the payment of the debt of thy holy death.

3. O how great thanks am I bound to render unto thee, that thou hast vouchsafed to show unto me and to all faithful people the good and the right way to thine eternal kingdom.

For thy life is our way, and by the path of holy patience we walk toward thee who art our Crown.

If thou hadst not gone before us and taught us, who would have cared to follow !

Alas, how many would remain behind and afar off, if they considered not thy glorious example !

Behold, we are even yet lukewarm, though we have heard of so many of thy miracles and doctrines. What would become of us, if we had not so great light whereby to follow thee !

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Endurance of Injuries and the Proof of True Patience

WHAT is it thou sayest, my son ? Cease to complain when thou considerest my passion and the sufferings of my saints.

Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

It is but little which thou sufferest in comparison with those who suffered so much, who were so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised.

Thou oughtest therefore to call to mind the heavier sufferings of others, that so thou mayest the more easily bear thine own very small troubles.

And if they seem to thee not very small, beware lest thine impatience be the cause of their seeming.

However, whether they be small or great, endeavor patiently to undergo them all.

2. The better thou disposest thyself to suffering, the more wisely thou doest and the greater reward shalt thou receive. Thou shalt also more easily endure it, if both in mind and by habit thou art diligently prepared thereunto.

Do not say, — I cannot endure to suffer these things at the hands of such a one nor ought I to endure things of this sort, for he hath done me great wrong and reproacheth me with things which I never thought of ; but of another I will willingly suffer, that is, if they are things which I shall see I ought to suffer.

Such a thought is foolish ; it considereth not the virtue of patience nor by whom it will be crowned, but rather weigheth too exactly the persons and the injuries offered to itself.

3. He is not truly patient who is willing to suffer only so much as he thinketh good, and from whom he pleaseth.

But the truly patient man mindeth not by whom he is exercised, whether by superiors, equals, or inferiors ;

whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But indifferently from every creature, how much soever or how often soever anything adverse befall him, he taketh it all thankfully as from the hands of God, and esteemeth it great gain.

For with God it is impossible that anything, how small soever, if only it be suffered for God's sake, should pass without its reward.

4. Be thou therefore prepared for the fight if thou wilt win the victory.

Without combat thou canst not attain unto the crown of patience.

If thou art unwilling to suffer, thou refusest to be crowned ; but if thou desire to be crowned, fight manfully, endure patiently.

Without labor there is no rest, nor without fighting can the victory be won.

O Lord, let that become possible to me by thy grace, which by nature seemeth impossible to me.

Thou knowest that I am able to suffer but little, and that I am quickly cast down when a slight adversity ariseth.

For thy name's sake, let every exercise of tribulation be made pleasant unto me ; for to suffer and to be afflicted for thy sake is very salutary for my soul.

CHAPTER XX

Of Admitting our Infirmities and of the Sufferings of this Life

I WILL acknowledge my sin unto thee ; I will confess mine infirmity unto thee, O Lord.

Oftentimes a small matter it is that maketh me sad and dejected.

I resolve to act with courage, but when even a small temptation cometh, I am at once in great straits.

It is sometimes a mere trifle whence a great temptation ariseth.

And whilst I think myself safe and when I least expect it, I sometimes find myself well-nigh overcome by a slight blast.

2. Behold therefore, O Lord, my low estate and my frailty, which is in every way known unto thee.

Have mercy on me and deliver me out of the mire,

that I may not stick fast therein and may not remain utterly cast down forever.

This is that which oftentimes striketh me down and confoundeth me in thy sight, that I am so subject to fall and so weak in resisting my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent, yet their continued assaults are troublesome and grievous unto me ; and it is very irksome to live thus daily in conflict.

Hereby doth my weakness become known to me, in that hateful fancies do always much more easily invade than forsake me.

3. Most mighty God of Israel, thou zealous lover of faithful souls ! Oh, that thou wouldst consider the labor and sorrow of thy servant, and assist him in all things whatsoever he undertaketh.

Strengthen me with heavenly courage lest the old man,^o the miserable flesh, not as yet fully subject to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand. Against this it will be needful for me to fight as long as I breathe in this miserable life.

Alas, what a life is this, where tribulation and miseries are never wanting ; where all is full of snares and enemies !

For when one tribulation or temptation goeth, another

cometh ; yea, and while the first conflict is yet lasting, many others come unexpectedly one after another.

4. How can life be loved that hath so many imbitterments and is subject to so many calamities and miseries ?

How too can it be called life that begetteth so many deaths and plagues ?

And yet it is the object of men's love, and its delights are sought by many.

The world is oftentimes blamed for being deceitful and vain, and yet men do not easily part with it because the desires of the flesh bear so great a sway.

But some things draw us to love the world, others to condemn it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life draw us to the love of the world, but the pains and miseries that justly follow them cause a hatred of the world and a loathing thereof.

5. But alas, a liking for vicious pleasures overcometh the mind of him who is given to the world, and he thinketh that delights lie beneath those nettles, because he hath neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God and the interior delights of virtue.

But they who perfectly condemn the world and study

to live to God under holy discipline, are not ignorant of the divine sweetness promised to those who truly forsake the world.

They also very clearly see how grievously the world erreth and how it is in many ways deceived.

CHAPTER XXI

That we are to Rest in God above All His Gifts and Benefits

ABOVE all things, and in all things, O my soul, thou shalt rest in the Lord always, for He is the everlasting rest of the saints.

Grant me, O most sweet and loving JESUS, to rest in thee above all creatures, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honor, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtilty, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort, above all hope and promise, above all desert and desire ;

Above all gifts and benefits that thou canst give and impart unto us, above all mirth and joy that the mind of man can receive and feel ;

Finally, above angels and archangels and all the heavenly host, above all things visible and invisible and above all that thou art not, O my God.

2. Because thou, O Lord my God, art supremely good above all ; thou alone art most high, thou alone most powerful, thou alone most full and sufficient, thou alone most sweet and consoling.

Thou alone art most lovely and loving, thou alone most noble and glorious above all things, in whom all good things in their perfection are and ever have been and shall be.

And therefore whatsoever thou bestowest on me besides thyself or revealest unto me of thyself or promisest, is but mean and unsatisfying whilst thou art not wholly seen and not fully possessed.

For surely my heart cannot truly rest nor be entirely contented, unless it rest in thee and rise above all gifts and all creatures whatsoever.

3. O thou most beloved spouse of my soul, JESUS Christ, thou most pure Lover, thou Lord of all creation ; oh, that I had the wings of true liberty that I might fly away and rest in thee !

Oh, when shall freedom of spirit be fully granted me to see how sweet thou art, my Lord God !

When shall I fully recollect myself in thee, that by reason of my love for thee I may not feel myself, but thee alone above all sense and measure, in a manner not known to all !

But now I oftentimes sigh and bear my unhappiness with grief ; because many evils occur in this vale of miseries which often trouble, grieve, and becloud me, often hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I can have no free access to thee nor enjoy thy sweet welcomings which are ever ready for the blessed spirits.

Oh, let my sighs move thee, and this manifold desolation here on earth.

4. O JESUS, thou brightness of eternal glory, thou comfort of the pilgrim soul, with thee is my tongue without voice, and my very silence speaketh unto thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come ?

Let Him come unto me His poor despised servant, and let Him make me glad ; let Him put forth His hand, and deliver His poor servant from all anguish.

Come, oh, come, for without thee I shall have no joyful day nor hour, for thou art my joy and without thee my table is empty.

A wretched creature am I, and as it were imprisoned

and loaded with fetters, until thou refresh me with the light of thy presence and grant me liberty and show me a friendly countenance.

5. Let others seek what they please instead of thee ; but for me, nothing else doth nor shall delight me but thou only, my God, my hope, my everlasting salvation.

I will not hold my peace nor cease to pray, until thy grace return again and thou speak inwardly unto me.

BEHOLD, here I am. Behold, I come unto thee, because thou hast called upon me. Thy tears and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and thy contrition of heart, have inclined and brought me unto thee.

And I said, Lord, I have called thee and have desired to enjoy thee, being ready to refuse all things for thy sake.

For thou first hast inspired me to seek thee.

Blessed be thou therefore, O Lord, that hast shown this goodness to thy servant according to the multitude of thy mercies.

6. What hath thy servant more to say before thee ? He can only greatly humble himself in thy sight, ever mindful of his own iniquity and vileness.

For there is none like unto thee in whatsoever is wonderful in heaven and earth.

Thy works are very good, thy judgments true, and by thy providence the universe is governed.

Praise therefore and glory be unto thee, O wisdom of the Father ; let my mouth, my soul, and all creatures together praise and bless thee.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Remembrance of God's Manifold Benefits

OPEN, O Lord, my heart in thy law, and teach me to walk in thy commandments.

Grant me to understand thy will and with great reverence and diligent consideration to remember thy benefits as well in general as in particular, that henceforward I may be able worthily to give thee thanks.

But I know and confess that I am not able, even in the least matter, to give thee due thanks for the favors which thou bestowest upon me.

I am less than the least of all thy benefits ; and when

I consider thy noble bounty, the greatness thereof maketh my spirit to faint.

2. All that we have in our soul and body and whatsoever we possess outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, are thy benefits, and declare thy bounty, mercy, and goodness, from which we have received all good things.

Although one hath received more and another less, all of us are thine, and without thee even the least blessing cannot be had.

He that hath received the greatest cannot glory of his own desert nor extol himself above others; for he is the greatest and the best who ascribeth least unto himself and who in rendering thanks is the most humble and most devout.

And he that esteemeth himself viler than all men and judgeth himself most unworthy, is fittest to receive greater blessings.

3. But he that hath received fewer ought not to be out of heart nor to take it grievously nor to envy them that are enriched with greater store, but rather to turn his mind to thee and highly to praise thy goodness in bestowing thy gifts so bountifully, so freely, and so willingly, without respect of persons.

All things proceed from thee and therefore in all things thou art to be praised.

Thou knowest what is fit to be given to every one ; and why this man hath less and that man more is not for us to judge, but for thee who dost exactly know what is meet for every one.

4. Wherefore, O Lord God, I esteem it a great grace not to have much of that which outwardly and in the opinion of men seemeth worthy of glory and applause.

He who considereth his own poverty and unworthiness, far from being grieved or saddened or cast down thereat, should take great comfort and be glad.

For thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and humble and the despised of this world to be thy familiar friends and servants.

Witness the apostles themselves whom thou hast made princes over all the earth.

And yet they lived in the world without complaint, so humble and simple, without malice and deceit, that they even rejoiced to suffer reproach for thy name ; and what the world abhorreth they embraced with great affection.

5. When therefore a man loveth thee and acknowledgeth thy benefits, nothing ought so to rejoice him as

thy will toward him and the good pleasure of thine eternal decrees.

And herewith he ought to be so contented and comforted that he would as willingly be the least as another would wish to be the greatest.

He would too be as peaceable and contented in the last place as in the first, as willing to be a despised castaway of no name or character as to be preferred in honor before others and to be greater in the world than they.

For thy will and thy glory ought to be preferred before all things, and to comfort him more and to please him better than all the benefits which he hath received or may receive.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of Four Things that bring Great Interior Peace

MY son, now will I teach thee the way of peace and of true liberty.

O Lord, I beseech thee, do as thou sayest, for this is delightful to me to hear.

BE desirous, my son, to do the will of another rather than thine own.

Choose always to have less rather than more.

Seek always the lowest place and to be beneath every one.

Wish always and pray that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee.

Behold, such a man entereth within the borders of peace and rest.

2. O Lord, this short discourse of thine containeth within itself much perfection.

It is short in words, but full of meaning and abundant in fruit.

For if it could faithfully be kept by me, I should not be so easily disturbed.

For as often as I feel myself unquiet and weighed down, I find that I have strayed from this doctrine.

But thou who canst do all things and ever lovest the profiting of my soul, increase in me thy grace that I may be able to fulfil thy words and to work out mine own salvation.

A Prayer against Evil Thoughts

3. O Lord, my God, be not thou far from me ; my God, haste thee to help me ; for there have risen up

against me sundry thoughts and great fears, afflicting my soul.

How shall I pass through unhurt? How shall I break them to pieces?

I, saith he, will go before thee and will humble the great ones of the earth; I will open the gates of the prison and reveal to thee the secrets of hidden places.

Do, O Lord, as thou sayest and let all evil thoughts fly from before thy face.

This is my hope, my one only consolation, to flee unto thee in every tribulation, to trust in thee, to call upon thee from my inmost heart and to wait patiently for thee to comfort me.

A Prayer that the Mind be enlightened

4. O merciful JESUS, enlighten me with the brightness of thine inward light, and take away all darkness from the habitation of my heart.

Repress thou my many wandering thoughts, and break into pieces those temptations which so violently assault me.

Fight thou strongly for me and vanquish these evil beasts, these alluring desires of the flesh, that so peace

may come through thy power and that thine abundant praise may resound in a holy temple, that is, in a pure conscience.

Command the winds and tempests ; say unto the sea, — Be still ; say to the north wind, — Blow not ; and there shall be a great calm.

5. Send out thy light and thy truth that they may shine upon the earth, for until thou enlighten me I am but as earth without form and void.

Pour forth thy grace from above, steep my heart in thy heavenly dew, supply fresh streams of devotion to water the face of the earth, that it may bring forth fruit good and excellent.

Lift thou up my mind which is pressed down by a load of sins and draw up my whole desire to things heavenly, that having tasted the sweetness of heavenly happiness it may be irksome to me even to think of earthly things.

6. Do thou pluck me away, and deliver me from all the perishable comfort of creatures, for no created thing can fully comfort me and quiet my desires.

Join me to thyself in an inseparable bond of love, for thou alone dost satisfy him that loveth thee, and without thee all things are vain and empty.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of Avoiding Curious Inquiry into the Lives of Others

MY son, be not curious nor trouble thyself with idle cares.

What is this or that to thee? Follow thou me.

For what is it to thee whether that man be such or such, whether this man do or speak this or that?

Thou shalt not need to answer for others, but shalt give an account of thyself; why therefore dost thou thus meddle with them?

Behold, I know every one and see all things that are done under the sun; also I understand how it is with every one, what he thinks, what he wishes, and at what his intentions aim.

Unto me therefore all things are to be committed; keep thyself in peace, and leave the restless to be as restless as they will.

Whatsoever they shall have done or said shall come upon themselves, for me they cannot deceive.

2. Be not careful for the shadow of a great name or for the familiar friendship of many or for the particular affection of men, for these things distract and darken the heart.

Willingly would I speak my word and reveal my secrets unto thee if thou wouldst diligently watch for my coming and open unto me the door of thine heart.

Be thou circumspect and watchful in prayer, and in all things humble thyself.

CHAPTER XXV

In what consist Peace of Heart and True Spiritual Progress

MY son, I have said, — Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.

Peace is what all desire, but all do not care for the things that pertain to true peace.

My peace is with the humble and gentle of heart ; in much patience shall thy peace be.

If thou wilt hear me and follow my voice, thou shalt be able to enjoy much peace.

WHAT then shall I do, Lord ?

In every matter look to thyself as to what thou doest and what thou sayest, and direct thy whole attention

to please me alone and neither to desire nor to seek anything besides me.

But of the words or deeds of others judge nothing rashly; neither do thou entangle thyself with things not intrusted to thee. Thus it may come to pass that thou mayest be little or seldom disturbed.

2. But never to feel any disturbance at all or to suffer any trouble of mind or body, belongs not to this life but to the state of eternal rest.

Think not therefore that thou hast found true peace if thou feel no heaviness, nor that all is well when thou art vexed with no adversary, nor that all is perfect if all things be done according to thy desire.

Neither do thou think at all highly of thyself nor account thyself to be specially beloved if thou be in a state of great devotion and sweetness, for it is not by these things that a true lover of virtue is known nor doth the spiritual progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

3. WHEREIN then, O Lord, doth it consist?

IN giving thyself up with all thy heart to the divine will, not seeking thine own interest either in great matters or in small, either in time or in eternity.

So shalt thou keep one and the same demeanor, always giving thanks both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance.

Be thou so full of courage and so patient in hope, that when inward comfort is withdrawn thou mayest prepare thy heart to suffer even greater things; and do not justify thyself, as though thou oughtest not to suffer such and so great afflictions, but justify me in whatsoever I appoint, and cease not to praise my holy name.

Then thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and thou shalt have a sure hope to see my face again with great delight.

Now if thou attain to the full contempt of thyself, know that thou shalt then enjoy abundance of peace, as great as is possible in this thy state of sojourning.

CHAPTER XXVI

*Of the Excellency of a Free Mind, which is sooner gained by
Humble Prayer than by Study*

O LORD, it is the business of a perfect man never to withdraw his mind from the thought of heavenly things, and thus to pass amidst many cares with-

out care ; not as one destitute of all feeling, but by the privilege of a free mind cleaving to no creature with inordinate affection.

2. I beseech thee, my most gracious God, preserve me from the cares of this life lest I should be too much entangled therein, and from the many necessities of the body lest I should be ensnared by pleasure, and from whatsoever is an obstacle to the soul lest, broken by troubles, I should be overthrown.

I speak not of those things which worldly vanity so earnestly desireth, but of those miseries which, as punishments and as the common curse of mortality, do so weigh down and hinder the soul of thy servant that it cannot enter into the freedom of the spirit as often as it would.

3. O my God, thou sweetness ineffable, turn into bitterness for me all that carnal comfort which draweth me away from the love of eternal things and wickedly allureth me to itself by the view of some present good.

Let me not be overcome, O Lord, let me not be overcome by flesh and blood ; let not the world and the brief glory thereof deceive me ; let not the devil and his subtle craft trip me up.

Give me strength to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere.

Give me, instead of all the comforts of the world, the most sweet unction of thy Spirit; and, in place of carnal love, pour into my heart the love of thy name.

4. Behold meat, drink, clothing, and other necessities for the support of the body are burdensome to a fervent spirit.

Grant me to use such comforts moderately, and not to be entangled with an undue desire of them.

It is not lawful to cast away all things because nature needeth to be sustained; but to require superfluities and those things that are merely pleasurable, the holy law forbiddeth us; for then the flesh would rebel against the spirit.

Herein, I beseech thee, let thy hand govern me and teach me, that I may not exceed in anything.

CHAPTER XXVII

That it is Self-love which most withholdeth us from the
Sovereign Good

MY son, thou oughtest to give all for all, and to be in nothing thine own.

Know thou that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world.

According to the love and affection thou bearest to anything, so doth it cleave unto thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well-ordered, thou shalt be free from bondage.

Do not covet that which it is not lawful for thee to have; do not have that which may hinder thee, and may deprive thee of inward liberty.

Strange it is that thou committest not thyself wholly unto me from the bottom of thy heart, together with all things thou canst have or desire.

2. Why dost thou consume thyself with vain grief? Why dost thou weary thyself with needless cares?

Submit to my good will, and thou shalt suffer no hurt.

If thou seek this or that, and wouldst be here or there, the better to enjoy thine own profit and pleasure, thou shalt never be at peace nor free from trouble of

mind ; for in every case something will be wanting and in every place there will be some one to cross thee.

3. It profiteth thee not therefore to obtain and multiply outward things, but rather to despise them and utterly to root them out from thy heart.

And this thou must understand not only of revenues and riches, but of seeking after honor and of the desire of vain praise, which all must pass away with this world.

No place availeth if the spirit of fervor be wanting, neither shall that peace long continue which is sought from without. If the state of thy heart be destitute of a true foundation, that is, if thou stand not steadfast in me, thou mayest change, but shalt not better thyself.

For when occasion ariseth and is laid hold of, thou wilt find that which thou didst flee from, and yet worse.

A Prayer for a Clean Heart and Heavenly Wisdom

4. STRENGTHEN me, O God, by the grace of thy holy Spirit.

Grant me to be strengthened with might in the inner man and to empty my heart of all useless care and anguish, so that I be not drawn away with sundry desires of anything whatever, whether mean or precious, but

that I look on all things as passing away, on myself also as soon to pass away with them.

For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all things are vanity and affliction of spirit. O how wise is he that so considereth them !

5. O Lord, grant me heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek and to find thee, above all things to enjoy and to love thee, and to think of all other things as they really are, according to thy wise ordering.

Grant me prudence to avoid him that flattereth me, to endure patiently him that contradicteth me.

For it is a great part of wisdom not to be moved with every wind of words, nor to give ear to an evil flatterer ; for thus I shall walk securely in the way which I have begun.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Against the Tongues of Detractors

MY son, take it not grievously if some think ill of thee and speak that which thou wouldest not willingly hear.

Thou oughtest to be the hardest judge of thyself and to think no man weaker than thyself.

If thou dost walk spiritually, thou wilt not much weigh fleeting words.

It is no small wisdom to keep silence in an evil time and in thy heart to turn thyself to me, and not to be troubled by the judgment of men.

2. Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men, for whether they judge well of thee or ill, thou art not on that account other than thyself.

Where are true peace and true glory? Are they not in me?

And he that careth not to please men nor feareth to displease them shall enjoy much peace.

From inordinate love and vain fear arise all disquietude of heart and distraction of the senses.

CHAPTER XXIX

*That we ought to call upon God and bless Him when Tribulation
is upon us*

BLESSED be thy Name, O Lord, forever, for that it is thy will that this temptation and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot escape it, but must needs flee unto thee, that thou mayest help me and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in affliction and it is not well with me, but I am much troubled with the present suffering.

And now, O beloved Father, what shall I say? I am in great distress; save me from this hour.

Yet for this reason came I unto this hour that thou mightest be glorified, when I shall have been greatly humbled and by thee delivered.

Let it please thee, Lord, to deliver me; for, wretched that I am, what can I do and whither shall I go without thee?

Grant me patience, O Lord, even now in this my time of tribulation. Help me, my God, and then I will not fear, how grievously soever I be afflicted.

2. And now in these my troubles what shall I say?

Lord, thy will be done! I have well deserved to be afflicted and weighed down.

Surely I ought to bear it; and may I bear it with patience, until the tempest be overpast and all be well again or even better!

But thine omnipotent hand is able to take even this temptation from me and to assuage the violence thereof that I utterly sink not under it; as oftentimes heretofore thou hast done unto me, O my God, my Mercy!

And the more difficult it is to me, so much the more easy to thee is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

CHAPTER XXX

Of Asking the Divine Aid, and of Confidence in Recovering Grace

MY son, I am the Lord who giveth strength in the day of tribulation.

Come thou unto me when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hindereth heavenly consolation, that thou art too slow in turning thyself unto prayer.

For before thou dost earnestly supplicate me thou seekest in the meanwhile many comforts and lookest for refreshment in outward things.

And hence it cometh to pass that all doth little profit thee until thou well consider that I am he who doth rescue them that trust in me, and that out of me there is neither powerful help nor profitable counsel nor lasting remedy.

But do thou, having now recovered breath after the

tempest, gather strength again in the light of my mercies ; for I am at hand, saith the Lord, to repair all, not only entirely, but also abundantly and in most plentiful measure.

2. Is anything difficult to me, or shall I be as one that promiseth and performeth not ?

Where is thy faith ? Stand firmly and with perseverance ; take courage and be patient ; comfort will come to thee in due season.

Wait, I say, wait for me ; I will come and heal thee.

It is a temptation that vexeth thee, and a vain fear that affrighteth thee.

What else doth anxiety about the future bring to thee but sorrow upon sorrow ? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

It is a vain thing and unprofitable, to be either disturbed or pleased about future things which perhaps will never come to pass.

3. But it is in the nature of man to be deluded with such imaginations, and it is a sign of a mind as yet weak to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy.

For so that he may but delude and deceive thee, he careth not whether it be by true things or by false,

whether he overthrow thee with the love of present things or the fear of future things.

Let not therefore thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Trust in me and put thy confidence in my mercy.

When thou thinkest thyself farthest off from me, oftentimes I am nearest unto thee.

When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes the greatest gain of reward is close at hand.

All is not lost, when a thing falleth out contrary to thy wishes.

Thou must not judge according to present feeling, nor so take any grief or give thyself over to it, whencesoever it cometh, as though all hopes of escape were quite taken away.

4. Think not thyself wholly forsaken though for a time I have sent thee some tribulation or even have withdrawn thy desired comfort, for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and for the rest of my servants, that ye be exercised with adversities than that ye should have all things according to your desires.

I know the secret thoughts of thy heart and that it

is very expedient for thy welfare to be left sometimes without spiritual enjoyment, lest perhaps thou shouldst be puffed up with thy prosperous estate and shouldst take pride in thyself for that which thou art not.

That which I have given I can take away, and can restore it again when I please.

5. When I give it, it is still mine ; when I withdraw it, I take not anything that is thine, for every good and every perfect gift is mine.

If I send thee affliction, or any cross whatsoever, repine not nor let thy heart fail thee ; I can quickly succor thee and turn all thy heaviness into joy.

Nevertheless I am righteous and greatly to be praised when I deal thus with thee.

6. If thou be wise, and consider this rightly, thou wilt never mourn so dejectedly for any adversity, but rather wilt rejoice and give thanks.

Yea, thou wilt account this thine especial joy, that I afflict thee with sorrows and do not spare thee.

As my Father hath loved me, so I also love you, said I unto my beloved disciples, whom surely I sent forth, not to temporal joys but to great conflicts, not to honor but to contempt, not to idleness but to labors, not to rest but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember thou these words, O my son !

CHAPTER XXXI

Of Ignoring Creatures as a Means of Finding the Creator

O LORD, I stand much in need of yet greater grace, if it be thy will that I should attain to that state where neither man nor any creature shall be a hindrance to me.

For as long as anything holdeth me back, I cannot freely take my flight to thee.

He desired to fly freely that said, — Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest.^o

What is more at rest than the eye that is single^o? And who is more free than he that desireth nothing upon earth?

A man ought therefore to mount above all creatures and perfectly renounce himself, and in ecstasy of mind perceive that thou, the Creator of all things, hast nothing amongst creatures like unto thee.

Unless a man be set free from all creatures he cannot wholly attend unto divine things.

And therefore are there so few contemplative, because few can wholly withdraw themselves from things created and perishing.

2. To obtain this, there is need of much grace to elevate the soul and carry it away above itself.

And unless a man be uplifted in spirit and be freed from all creatures and wholly united unto God, whatsoever he knoweth and whatsoever he hath are of small account.

A long while shall he be little and lie grovelling below, whoever he be that esteemeth anything great save the one only infinite eternal Good.

And whatsoever is not God is nothing and ought to be accounted as nothing.

There is great difference between the wisdom of a man devout and taught of God and the knowledge of a man learned and studious.

Far more noble is that learning which floweth from above, from the divine influence, than that which is painfully acquired by the wit of man.

3. There are many that desire contemplation, but they endeavor not to practise those things that are needful thereunto.

A great hindrance it is that men rest in signs and in the things of sense and attend but little to perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led or

what we pretend, we that seem to be called spiritual, that we take so much pains and are so full of anxiety about transitory and worthless things and so rarely think of our own inward affairs with full recollection of mind.

4. Alas, after a slight recollection, we rush into outward things again and weigh not our works with diligent examination.

We heed not where our affections lie nor bewail the impurity that is in all our actions.

For all flesh had corrupted its way, and therefore did the great deluge^o ensue.

Since, then, the inward affection is much corrupted, the action thence proceeding must needs be corrupted also, — a proof of the absence of all interior strength.

From a pure heart proceedeth the fruit of a good life.

5. We ask how much a man hath done ; but with how much virtue he hath done it, is not so diligently considered.

We inquire whether he be courageous, rich, handsome, skilful, a good writer, a good singer, or a skilled workman ; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and spiritual, is seldom spoken of.

Nature respecteth the outward things of a man ; grace turneth itself to the inward.

The one often judgeth amiss ; the other hath her trust in God, and so is not deceived.

CHAPTER XXXII

Of Self-denial and Renunciation

MY son, thou canst not possess perfect liberty unless in all things thou deny thyself.

They all are in fetters who merely seek their own interest and are lovers of themselves. Covetous are they, curious, wanderers, always seeking what is soft and delicate, not the things of JESUS Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which will not continue.

For whatsoever cometh not of God shall perish.

Keep this short and complete saying : Forsake all and thou shalt find all ; forego desire and thou shalt find rest.

Consider this well, and when thou hast fulfilled it thou shalt understand all things.

2. O Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport ; yea, rather in this short word is included all perfection.

My son, thou oughtest not to turn back nor at once to be cast down when thou hearest of the way of the perfect, but rather to be stirred up to higher things, and at least in longing desire to sigh after them.

I would it were so with thee that thou wert arrived at this, to be no longer a lover of thyself but to stand merely at my beck and at his whom I have appointed a father over thee;° then thou shouldst exceedingly please me and all thy life should pass away in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to part with, which, unless thou wholly resign unto me, thou shalt not attain to that which thou desirest.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest become rich; that is, heavenly wisdom, which treadeth under foot all lower things.

Set aside earthly wisdom and study not to please others or thyself.

3. I said that mean things must be bought with things which, among men, seem precious and of great esteem.

For true heavenly wisdom doth seem very mean, of small account, and almost forgotten among men, as having no high thoughts of itself, nor seeking to be

magnified upon earth. Many indeed praise it with their lips, but in their life they are far from it ; yet is it the precious pearl, which is hidden from many.

CHAPTER XXXIII

*Of Inconstancy of Heart, and of Directing our Final Intention
to God*

MY son, trust not to thy feelings, for whatever they be now they will quickly be changed towards some other thing.

As long as thou livest, thou art subject to change, even against thy will ; so that thou art at one time merry, at another sad ; at one time quiet, at another troubled ; now devout, now undevout ; now diligent, now listless ; now grave, now light-minded.

But he that is wise and well instructed in spirit standeth fast upon these changing things, not heeding what he feeleth in himself or which way the wind of instability bloweth ; but that the whole intent of his mind may be to the right and the best end.

For thus he will be able to continue one and the

same and unshaken in the midst of so many various events, directing continually the single eye of his intention unto me.

2. And the purer the eye of the intention is, with so much the more constancy doth a man pass through the several kinds of storms which assail him.

But in many the eye of a pure intent waxeth dim, for it is quickly drawn aside to any pleasurable object which meeteth it.

Rare it is to find one who is wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So of old the Jews came into Bethania to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus^o also.

The eye of our intention therefore is to be purified that it may be single and right, and is to be directed unto me beyond all the various earthly objects which come between.

CHAPTER XXXIV

That to him that loveth, God is Sweet above All Things and in
All Things

BEHOLD! My God and my all. What would I more, and what greater happiness can I desire?

Oh, sweet and delightful word! But to him only that loveth the Word, not the world nor the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! To him that understandeth, enough is said; and to repeat it again and again, is pleasant to him that loveth.

For when thou art present all things do yield delight, but when thou art absent everything becometh irksome.

Thou givest tranquillity of heart and much peace and pleasant joy.

Thou makest us to take delight in all things, and in all to praise thee; neither can anything please long without thee, but if it be pleasant and grateful thy grace must needs be present, and it must be seasoned with the sweetness of thy wisdom.

2. What will not be pleasant to the taste of him who hath a true relish for thee?

And to him that hath no relish for thee what can be pleasant?

But the wise men of the world and they who relish the things of the flesh, come short of thy wisdom; for in the former is found much vanity, and in the latter death.

But they that follow thee in contempt of worldly things and mortification of the flesh, are known to be truly wise; for they are brought over from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

These relish God; and what good soever is found in creatures, they wholly refer unto the praise of their Maker.

Great, however, yea, very great, is the difference between the sweetness of the Creator and of the creature, of Eternity and of time, of Light Uncreated and of the light that receiveth its light therefrom.

3. O thou everlasting Light, surpassing all created lights, dart the beams of thy brightness from above to pierce all the most inward parts of my heart.

Purify, rejoice, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with all the powers thereof, that I may cleave unto thee with abundance of joy and triumph.

Oh, when will that blessed and desired hour come,

that thou mayest satisfy me with thy presence and mayest be unto me all in all?

So long as this is not granted me, I shall not have perfect joy.

Still, alas, the old man doth live in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

Still doth he mightily strive against the spirit and stirreth up inward wars and suffereth not the kingdom of my soul to be in peace.

4. But thou that rulest the power of the sea and stillest the rising of the waves thereof, arise and help me!

Scatter the nations that delight in war, crush thou them in thy might.

Display thy greatness, I beseech thee, and let thy right hand be glorified; for there is no other hope or refuge for me, save in thee, O Lord my God.

CHAPTER XXXV

That there is No Security from Temptation in this Life

MY son, thou art never secure in this life, but as long as thou livest thou shalt always need spiritual armor.

Thou dwellest among enemies and art assaulted on the right hand and on the left.

If therefore thou defend not thyself on every side with the shield of patience, thou canst not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou fix not thy heart on me with sincere willingness to suffer all things for me, thou wilt not be able to bear the heat of this combat nor to attain to the palm of the blessed.

Thou oughtest therefore manfully to go through all, and to secure a strong hand against whatsoever withstandeth thee.

For to him that overcometh is manna given, but for the indolent there remaineth much misery.

2. If thou seek rest in this life, how wilt thou then attain to the everlasting rest?

Dispose not thyself for much rest, but for great patience.

Seek true peace, not on earth but in heaven ; not in men, nor in any other creature, but in God alone.

For the love of God thou oughtest cheerfully to undergo all things ; that is to say, all labor, grief, temptation, vexation, anxiety, necessity, infirmity, injury, detraction, reproof, humiliation, shame, correction, and contempt.

These help to virtue ; these are the trial of a novice of Christ ; these form the heavenly crown.

I will give an everlasting reward for this short labor, and infinite glory for transitory shame.

3. Thinkest thou that thou shalt always have spiritual consolations at will ?

My saints had not such always, but they had many afflictions and sundry temptations and great discomfords.

But in all these they did bear up patiently and trusted rather in God than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory.

Wilt thou have that at once which many after many tears and great labors have hardly obtained ?

Wait for the Lord, conduct thyself manfully, and be of good courage ; do not despond, do not fall off, but constantly offer both body and soul for the glory of God.

• I will reward thee most abundantly ; I will be with thee in every tribulation.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Against the Vain Judgments of Man

MY son, rest thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not the judgment of men when conscience testifieth to thy piety and innocence.

It is a good and happy thing to suffer in such a way ; nor will this be grievous to a heart which is humble, and which trusteth rather in God than in itself.

Most men are prone to talk much, and therefore little trust is to be placed in them.

Moreover, to satisfy all is not possible.

Although Paul endeavored to please all in the Lord and made himself all things unto all men, yet with him it was a very small thing that he should be judged of man's judgment.

2. He did for the edification and salvation of others what lay in him and as much as he was able, yet could he not hinder his being sometimes judged and despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God who knew all, and with patience and humility he defended himself against unjust tongues and against such as thought

vanities and lies and spake boastfully whatever they listed.

Sometimes notwithstanding he made answer, lest by his silence the weak should be scandalized.

3. Who art thou that fearest a mortal man? To-day he is, and to-morrow he is seen no more.

Fear God, and thou shalt not need to shrink from the terrors of men.

What harm can the words or injuries of any man do thee? He hurteth himself rather than thee, nor shall he be able to avoid the judgment of God, whosoever he be.

Do thou have God before thine eyes, and contend not with querulous words.

And if for the present thou seem to be worsted and to suffer shame undeservedly, do not therefore repine, neither do thou by impatience lessen thy crown.

But rather lift thou up thine eyes to me in heaven, who am able to deliver thee from all shame and wrong and to render to every man according to his works.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Of Pure and Entire Resignation to obtain Freedom of Heart

MY son, lose thyself and thou shalt find me.
Stand without choice or self-seeking and thou shalt always be a gainer.

For greater grace shall be added to thee the moment thou hast resigned thyself and hast not resumed thy claim.

LORD, how often shall I resign myself, and wherein shall I forsake myself?

ALWAYS and at every hour, as well in small things as in great; I except nothing, but desire that thou be found stripped of all things.

Otherwise, how canst thou be mine and I thine, unless thou be stripped of all self-will, both within and without?

The sooner thou doest this, the better it will be with thee, and the more fully and sincerely thou doest it so much the more shalt thou please me and so much the greater shall be thy gain.

2. Some there are who resign themselves, but with

exceptions, for they put not their whole trust in God ; therefore they study how to provide for themselves.

Some also at first offer all, but afterwards being assailed with temptation, they return to their own devices, and therefore make no progress in the ways of virtue.

These shall not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart nor to the favor of my sweetest friendship, unless they first make an entire resignation and a daily oblation of themselves. Without this, there neither is nor can be a fruitful union.

3. I have very often said unto thee, and now again I say the same, — Forsake thyself, resign thyself and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace.

Give all for all ; seek nothing, ask back nothing ; abide purely and with a firm confidence in me, and thou shalt possess me ; thou shalt be free in heart, and darkness shall not overwhelm thee.

Let this be thy whole endeavor, let this be thy prayer, this thy desire ; that, being stripped of all selfishness, thou mayest with entire simplicity follow JESUS only, and, dying to thyself, mayest live eternally to me.

Then all vain imaginations, evil perturbations, and superfluous cares shall fly away.

Then also immoderate fear shall leave thee and inordinate love shall die.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Of Good Government in Outward Things, and of Recourse to God in Dangers

MY son, thou oughtest with all diligence to endeavor that in every place and action and in all outward business thou be inwardly free and thoroughly master of thyself, and that all things be under thee and not thou under them.

Thou must be lord and master of thine own actions, not a servant or a hireling.

Rather shouldest thou be as a freed man and a true Hebrew, passing over into the lot and liberty of the children of God.

For they stand above things present and contemplate things eternal.

They look on transitory things with the left eye, and with the right behold the things of heaven.

Temporal things cannot draw them to cleave unto

them ; rather do they draw temporal things to serve them, and this in such way as they are ordained by God and are appointed by the Master Workman who hath left nothing in His creation without due order.

2. If too thou stand steadfast in all things and do not estimate what thou seest and hearest by the outward appearance nor with a carnal eye, but at once in every affair dost enter with Moses into the tabernacle^o to ask counsel of the Lord, thou shalt sometimes hear the divine oracle and shalt return instructed concerning many things, both present and to come.

For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for the deciding of doubts and questions, and fled to the help of prayer for support under dangers and the iniquity of men.

So oughtest thou in like manner to fly to the closet of thine heart, very earnestly craving the divine favor.

For we read that for this cause Josue and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gabaonites,^o because they asked not counsel of the Lord, but giving credit too lightly to fair words, were deluded by counterfeit piety.

CHAPTER XXXIX

That a Man should not be Immersed in Business

MY son, always commit thy cause to me ; I will dispose well of it in due time.

Wait for my ordering of it, and thou shalt find it will be for thy profit.

O LORD, I do most cheerfully commit all unto thee, for my care can little avail.

Would that I did not so much dwell on future things but gave myself up without a struggle to thy good pleasure.

2. MY son, oftentimes a man striveth vehemently for something he desireth, and when he hath obtained it he beginneth to be of another mind ; for the affections do not long continue fixed on one object, but rather flit from one thing to another.

It is therefore no small benefit for a man to forsake himself, even in the smallest things.

3. The true profiting of a man consisteth in the denying of himself, and he that thus denieth himself liveth in great freedom and security.

But the old enemy, who always setteth himself against all that are good, ceaseth at no time from tempting, but day and night lieth grievously in wait to cast the unwary, if he can, headlong into the snare of deceit.

Therefore, — Watch ye, and pray, saith the Lord, that ye enter not into temptation.

CHAPTER XL

That Man hath no Good in himself, nor Anything whereof to Glory

LORD, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him?

What hath man deserved that thou shouldest grant him thy favor?

O Lord, what cause have I to complain if thou forsake me, or if thou do not that which I desire, what can I justly say against it?

Surely this I may truly think and say: Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing that is good of myself, but in all things I am wanting and do ever tend to nothing.

And unless thou help me and inwardly instruct me, I must become altogether lukewarm and careless.

2. But thou, O Lord, art always the same and endurest forever ; always good, just, and holy ; doing all things well, justly, and holily, and disposing all things with wisdom.

But I, that am more ready to go backward than forward, do not ever continue in one estate, for changes sevenfold pass over me.

Yet is it soon better with me when it so pleaseth thee and when thou vouchsafest to stretch forth thy helping hand ; for thou alone canst help me without human aid, and canst so strengthen me that my countenance shall be no more changed, but my heart shall be turned to thee alone and be at rest.

3. Wherefore, if I could once perfectly cast off all human comfort, either for the attainment of devotion or because of mine own necessities enforcing me to seek after thee, then might I well hope in thy grace and rejoice for the gift of fresh consolation ; for no mortal man could comfort me.

4. Thanks be unto thee from whom all things proceed, whensoever it is well with me.

But I am in thy sight mere vanity and nothing, a man weak and inconstant.

Whereof then can I glory, or for what do I desire to be respected? Is it because I am nothing? This is most vain.

Mere empty glory is in truth an evil plague, a very great vanity; because it draweth a man from true glory and robbeth him of heavenly grace.

For whilst he pleaseth himself, he displeaseth thee; whilst he gapeth after the praise of men, he is deprived of true virtue.

5. But true glory and holy exultation is for a man to glory in thee and not in himself; to rejoice in thy name, not in his own strength, and not to delight in any creature but for thy sake.

Praised be thy name, not mine; magnified be thy work, not mine. Let thy holy name be blessed, but to me let no part of men's praises be given.

Thou art my glory, thou art the joy of my heart.

In thee will I glory and rejoice all the day; but as for myself, I will not glory, but in my infirmities.

6. Let the Jews seek honor one of another, I will seek that which cometh from God alone.

For all human glory, all temporal honor, all worldly magnificence, compared to thy eternal glory, is vanity and folly.

O my God, my Truth and my Mercy, O Blessed Trinity, to thee alone be praise, honor, power, and glory, for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XLI

Of the Contempt of All Temporal Honor

MY son, trouble not thyself if thou see others honored and advanced whilst thou art contemned and debased.

Lift up thy heart into heaven to me, and the contempt of men on earth shall not grieve thee.

LORD, we are blind and are quickly misled by vanity.

If I look rightly into myself, I cannot say that any creature hath ever done me wrong, and therefore I cannot justly complain before thee.

2. But because I have often and grievously sinned against thee, all creatures do justly take arms against me.

Unto me, therefore, shame and contempt are justly due ; but unto thee praise, honor, and glory.

And unless I prepare myself with cheerful willing-

ness to be despised and forsaken of all creatures, and to be esteemed altogether nothing, I cannot obtain inward peace and stability nor be spiritually enlightened nor be fully united to thee.

CHAPTER XLII

That our Peace is not to be placed in Men

MY son, if thou rest thy peace on any man because of the opinion which thou hast of him or because of thine intimate acquaintance with him, thou shalt ever be unstable and entangled.

But if thou have recourse to the ever-living and abiding Truth, the departure or death of a friend will not grieve thee.

Thy regard for thy friend ought to be grounded in me ; and for my sake is he to be beloved, whosoever he be that thou thinkest well of, and who is very dear to thee in this life.

Without me friendship hath no strength and no continuance ; neither is that love true and pure which is not knit by me.

Thou oughtest to be so dead to such affections towards thy friends that, as much as appertaineth unto thee, thou shouldest be willing to be without all human friendship.

Man approacheth so much the nearer unto God the further he withdraweth from all earthly solace.

And the lower he descendeth in himself and the viler he becometh in his own sight, the higher he ascendeth towards God.

But he that attributeth any good unto himself hindereth the entry of God's grace; for the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh an humble heart.

If thou couldst perfectly annihilate thyself and empty thyself of all created love, then should I be constrained to flow into thee with great abundance of grace.

When thou lookest unto creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn in all things to overcome thyself for the love of thy Creator, and then shalt thou be able to attain to divine knowledge.

How small soever anything be, if it be inordinately loved and regarded, it keepeth thee back from the highest good and corrupteth thee.

CHAPTER XLIII

Against Vain and Worldly Learning

MY son, let not the sayings of men move thee, however fair and ingenious they may be ; for the kingdom of God consisteth not in words but in virtue.

Observe well my words for they inflame the heart and enlighten the mind, cause compunction and carry with them many a consolation.

Never read the word of God in order to appear more learned or more wise.

Be studious for the mortification of thy sins, for this will profit thee more than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. When thou shalt have read and learnt many things, thou oughtest ever to return to the one first principle.

I am He that teacheth man knowledge, and I give unto little children a clearer understanding than can be taught by man.

He therefore to whom I speak, shall quickly be wise and shall profit much in spirit.

Woe be to them that inquire many curious things of men and little care about the way of serving me !

The time will come when the Master of masters shall appear, Christ the Lord of angels, to hear the lessons of all ; that is, to examine the consciences of every one.

And then will He search Jerusalem with lamps, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the arguing of men's tongues shall be silent.

3. I am He who in one instant do raise up the humble mind so that a man shall understand more reasonings of eternal truth than if he had studied ten years in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without the desire of honor, without bandying of arguments.

I am He who instructeth men to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things heavenly, to relish things eternal, to flee honors, to endure offences, to place all hope in me, out of me to desire nothing, and above all things ardently to love me.

4. A certain one, by loving me entirely, became instructed in divine things, and was wont to speak that which was admirable.

He profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtilties.

But to some men I speak common things, to others

things uncommon ; to some I appear sweetly by signs and figures, but to some I reveal mysteries with much light.

The voice of books is indeed one, but it teacheth not all alike,° for I am the inward Teacher of truth, I am the Searcher of the heart, the Discerner of thought, the Mover of actions, distributing to every man as I judge meet.

CHAPTER XLIV

Of not Troubling Ourselfes with Outward Things

MY son, in many things it is thy duty to be ignorant and to esteem thyself as dead upon earth and as one to whom the whole world is crucified.

Thou must also pass by many things with a deaf ear, and rather think of those which pertain to thy peace.

It is more useful to turn away one's eyes from unpleasing things, and to leave every one to his own opinion, than to be a slave to contentious discourse.

If all stand well betwixt thee and God and if thou hast His judgment in thy mind, thou shalt the more easily endure to be overcome.

2. O LORD, to what a pass are we come ! Behold, we bewail a temporal loss, for a pitiful gain we toil and run ; and spiritual losses are forgotten and hardly ever return to mind.

That which profiteth little or nothing we heed, and that which is especially necessary we slightly pass over, because the whole man doth slide into outward things, and unless he speedily recovereth himself, he willingly continueth immersed therein.

CHAPTER XLV

That Credit is not to be given to All Men; for All are prone to offend in Words

GRANT me help, O Lord, in tribulation, for vain is the help of man !

How often have I been deceived, finding infidelity where I thought myself sure !

And how often have I found fidelity where I had least expected it !

It is in vain therefore to trust in men ; but the salvation of the righteous is of thee, O God !

Blessed be thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us.

We are weak and unstable, we are quickly deceived and soon changed.

2. Who is he that is able in all things so warily and circumspectly to keep himself, as never to fall into any deceit or perplexity?

But he that trusteth in thee, O Lord, and seeketh thee with a single heart, doth not so easily fall.

And if he fall into any tribulation, be he ever so much entangled, yet he shall quickly either through thee be delivered or by thee be comforted; for thou wilt not forsake him that trusteth in thee even to the end.

A friend is rarely to be found that continueth faithful in all his friend's distresses.

Thou, O Lord, even thou alone art most faithful at all times, and there is none like unto thee.

3. Oh, how wise was that holy soul that said, — My mind is firmly settled and grounded in Christ.

If it were so with me, then human fear would not easily vex me, nor the darts of words move me.

Who can foresee all things and who is able to provide against evils to come? If things foreseen do often-

times hurt us, how can things unlooked for do otherwise than wound us grievously?

But wretched that I am, why did I not provide better for myself? Why also have I so easily trusted others?

But we are men, nothing else but frail men, although by many we may be reputed and called angels.

To whom shall I give credit, O Lord? To whom but to thee? Thou art the truth, which neither doth deceive nor can be deceived.

And on the other side, every man is a liar, weak, inconstant, and subject to fall, especially in words; and therefore we must not immediately give credit to that which in the outward show seemeth at first to sound aright.

4. Oh, with what wisdom hast thou warned us to beware of men, and because a man's foes are they of his own household not forthwith to believe if one should say, Lo here or Lo there.

My hurt has been my instructor, and oh, that I might thereby increase my caution and not my folly.

Be wary, saith one, be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee; and whilst I hold my peace, and think it is secret, he cannot himself keep that which he desired

me to keep, but presently betrayeth both me and himself, and is gone.

From such tales and such indiscreet persons protect me, O Lord, that I neither fall into their hands nor ever commit such things myself.

Grant me to observe truth and constancy in my words and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I am not willing to suffer in others, I ought by all means to avoid myself.

5. Oh, how good is it, and how it tendeth to peace, to be silent about other men and not to believe at random all that is said, nor eagerly to report what we have heard.

How good it is to lay one's self open to few, and always to be seeking after thee who art the searcher of the heart.

Nor should we be carried about with every wind of words, but we should desire that all things, both within and without, be accomplished according to the pleasure of thy will.

How safe is it, for the keeping of heavenly grace, to avoid appearances and not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad, but to follow with all diligence the things which bring zeal and amendment of life.

6. To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known and over hastily commended !

How profitable hath grace been when preserved in silence in this frail life, which is temptation and warfare !

CHAPTER XLVI

Of Putting our Trust in God when Evil Words arise against Us

MY son, stand firm, and trust in me, for what are words but words ? They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou be guilty, see that thou be willing to amend thyself ; if conscience reproach thee not, resolve to suffer willingly for God's sake.

It is but a small matter to suffer sometimes a few words if thou hast not yet the courage to endure hard stripes.

And why do such small matters go to thy heart, but because thou art yet carnal and regardest men more than thou oughtest ?

For because thou art afraid to be despised thou art not willing to be reprov'd for thy faults, but seekest the shelter of excuses.

2. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt acknowledge that the world is yet alive in thee, and a vain desire to please men.

For when thou shunnest to be abased and reprov'd for thy faults, it is evident that thou art neither truly humble nor truly dead to the world nor the world crucified to thee.

But give diligent ear to my words and thou shalt not regard ten thousand words spoken by men.

Behold, if all should be spoken against thee that could be most maliciously invented, what would it hurt thee, if thou wouldst let it all pass by and heed it no more than a straw? Could it pluck so much as one hair from thy head?

3. But he that hath no heart within him and hath not God before his eyes is easily moved by a word of dispraise.

Whereas he that trusteth in me and hath no wish to trust in his own judgment shall be free from the fear of men.

For I am the judge and the discerner of all secrets;

I know how the matter was ; I know him that offered the injury and him that suffered it.

From me hath this proceeded ; this hath happened by my permission, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.

I shall judge the guilty and the innocent, but by a secret judgment I would beforehand prove them both.

4. The testimony of men oftentimes deceiveth, but my judgment is true ; it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is for the most part hidden and known in all respects but to few ; notwithstanding it never erreth, neither can it err, although to the eyes of the foolish it seemeth not right.

Men ought therefore to have recourse to me in every judgment, and not to lean on their own opinion.

For the just man will not be moved, whatsoever befalleth him from God ; and if any unjust charge be brought against him, he will not be much troubled.

Neither will he rejoice with a foolish exultation if by others he be reasonably vindicated.

For he considereth that I am He that searcheth the heart and the reins, and judgeth not according to the exterior, nor according to human appearance.

For that oftentimes in my sight is found worthy of blame, which in the judgment of men is thought to be commendable.

5. O LORD GOD, the just judge, strong and patient, thou who knowest the frailty and wickedness of men, be thou my strength and all my trust, for mine own conscience sufficeth me not.

Although I know nothing against myself, yet I cannot hereby justify myself; for without thy mercy, in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

CHAPTER XLVII

That All Grievous Things are to be endured for the Sake of
Everlasting Life

MY son, be not dismayed by the painful labors which thou hast undertaken for me, neither be thou utterly cast down because of any tribulations which befall thee; but let my promise strengthen and comfort thee in all events.

I am able to reward thee above all measure and degree.

Thou shalt not long toil here, and shalt not always be oppressed with grief.

Wait a little while and thou shalt see a speedy end of thine evils.

There will come an hour when all labor and trouble shall be no more.

Poor and brief is all that which passeth away with time.

2. Do with thy might what thou doest ; labor faithfully in my vineyard ; I will be thy reward.

Write, read, sing, sigh, keep silence, pray, bear crosses manfully ; life everlasting is worthy of all these, yea, and of greater combats.

Peace shall come in the day which is known unto the Lord, and it shall be neither day nor night such as now is, but everlasting light, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest.

Then thou shalt not say, — Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? Neither shalt thou cry, — Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged ! For death shall be cast down headlong, and there shall be salvation which cannot fail ; there shall be no more anxious thoughts, but blessed joy, sweet and lovely companionship.

3. Oh, if thou hadst seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and with how great glory they now rejoice who in times past were contemptible to this world and esteemed unworthy of life itself, truly thou wouldst presently humble thyself even unto the dust and wouldst rather seek to be under the feet of all than to command so much as one.

Neither wouldst thou desire the pleasant days of this life, but rather wouldst rejoice to suffer affliction for God, and esteem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

4. Oh, if thou hadst a taste of these things and didst suffer them to sink into the bottom of thy heart, how couldst thou so much as once complain?

Are not all painful labors to be endured for the sake of life eternal?

It is no small matter to lose or to gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up thy face therefore unto heaven; behold, I and all my saints with me, who in this world had great conflicts, do now rejoice, are now comforted, now secure, now at rest, and they shall remain with me everlastingly in the kingdom of my Father.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Of the Day of Eternity and of the Miseries of this Life

O MOST happy mansion of the city which is above !
O most clear day of eternity, which night obscur-
eth not, but the highest truth ever enlighteneth ! O
day ever joyful, ever secure, and never changing into
a contrary state !

Oh, that that day would shine upon us, and that all
these temporal things were at an end !

Upon the saints it shineth, glowing with everlasting
brightness ; but to those that are pilgrims on the earth
it appeareth only afar off, and as it were through a glass.

2. The citizens of heaven do know how joyful that
day is, but the banished children of Eve bewail the
bitterness and tediousness of this our life.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrows
and miseries.

Here a man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with
many passions, held fast by many fears, racked with
many cares, distracted with many curiosities, en-
tangled with many vanities, compassed about with
many errors, worn out with many labors, vexed with

temptations, enervated with pleasures, tormented with want.

3. Oh, when shall these evils be at an end? When shall I be delivered from the miserable bondage of my sins? When shall I be mindful, O Lord, of thee alone? When shall I fully rejoice in thee?

When shall I enjoy true liberty without any hindrances, without any trouble of mind and body?

When shall I have solid peace, peace secure and undisturbed, peace within and peace without, peace every way assured?

O merciful JESUS, when shall I stand to behold thee? When shall I contemplate the glory of thy kingdom? When wilt thou be unto me all in all?

Oh, when shall I be with thee in thy kingdom which thou hast prepared for thy beloved from all eternity?

I am left, poor and an exile, in the land of mine enemies, where there are daily wars and great calamities.

4. Comfort my banishment, assuage my sorrow; for my whole desire sigheth after thee.

For all is burdensome to me, whatsoever this world offereth for my consolation.

I long to enjoy thee in my inmost soul, but I cannot attain unto it.

My desire is that I may be wholly given up to things heavenly, but temporal things and unmortified passions weigh me down.

With the mind I wish to be above all things, but with the flesh I am enforced against my will to be beneath all.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight against myself and am become grievous to myself, whilst my spirit seeketh to be above and my flesh to be below.

5. Oh, what do I inwardly suffer whilst in my mind I dwell on things heavenly, and presently in my prayers a multitude of carnal fancies rise up to me! O my God, be not thou far from me, nor turn away in wrath from thy servant.

Dart forth thy lightning and disperse them; shoot thine arrows, and let all the phantoms of the enemy be confounded.

Gather in and call home my senses unto thee; make me to forget all worldly things; enable me speedily to cast away and to despise all the imaginations of wickedness.

Succor me, O thou the everlasting Truth, that no vanity may move me.

Come to me, thou heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity flee from before thy face.

Pardon me also, and in mercy deal gently with me, as often as in prayer I think on aught besides thee.

I must truly confess that I am wont to be subject to many distractions.

For oftentimes I am not there where I stand or sit, but rather I am there whither my thoughts carry me.

Where my thoughts are, there am I ; and commonly my thoughts are where lieth my affection.

That too readily occurreth to me which is by nature delightful or by custom is pleasing.

6. And for this cause, thou that art truth itself hast plainly said, — Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.

If I love heaven, I willingly muse on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice at the felicity of the world and grieve for the adversity thereof.

If I love the flesh, I shall fancy oftentimes those things that are pleasing to the flesh.

If I love the spirit, I shall delight to think on things spiritual.

For whatsoever I love, thereof do I willingly speak and hear and carry home with me the images thereof.

But blessed is the man who for thy sake, O Lord, is willing to part with all creatures, who doth violence to

his nature, and through fervor of spirit crucifieth the lusts of the flesh ; that so with a serene conscience he may offer pure prayers unto thee, and all earthly things both outwardly and inwardly being excluded, he may be worthy to be admitted into the angelic choirs.

CHAPTER XLIX

*Of the Desire of Everlasting Life, and what Great Rewards are
promised to those that strive Resolutely*

MY son, when thou perceivest the desire of everlasting bliss to be given thee from above, and longest to depart out of the tabernacle of this body that thou mayest contemplate my brightness without shadow of turning, open thy heart wide and receive this holy inspiration with thy whole desire.

Give greatest thanks to the Heavenly Goodness which treateth thee with such condescension, visiting thee mercifully, stirring thee up fervently, powerfully sustaining thee, lest through thine own weight thou fall down to earthly things.

Neither dost thou obtain this by thine own thought or

endeavor, but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace and divine favor, to the end that thou mayest make further progress in all virtue and obtain greater humility and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and endeavor to cleave unto me with the whole affection of thy heart and to serve me with fervent willingness.

2. My son, oftentimes the fire burneth, but the flame ascendeth not up without smoke.

So likewise the desires of some men burn towards heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptations of carnal affection.

And therefore it is not altogether purely for the honor of God that they make such earnest requests to Him.

Such also oftentimes are thy desires, when thou hast imagined them to be so serious and earnest.

For those desires are not pure and perfect which are tainted with self-love.

3. Ask not for that which is delightful and profitable to thee, but for that which is acceptable to me and which tendeth to my honor, for if thou judgest aright, thou oughtest to prefer and follow my appointment rather than thine own desire or anything whatever that is to be desired.

I know thy desire, and have heard thy frequent groanings.

Now thou longest to enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God ; now dost thou delight in the everlasting habitation, thy heavenly home full of joy ; but that hour is not yet come ; there still remaineth another time, and that a time of war, a time of labor and of trial.

Thou desirest to be filled with the sovereign good, but thou canst not attain it yet.

I AM that Good ; wait thou for me, saith the Lord, until the kingdom of God shall come.

4. Thou art still to be tried upon earth and to be exercised in many things.

Comfort shall be sometimes given thee, but the abundant fulness thereof shall not be granted.

Take courage therefore and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things contrary to nature.

It is thy duty to put on the new man, and to be changed into another man.

It is thy duty oftentimes to do what thou wouldst not, and to leave undone what thou wouldst do.

That which pleaseth others shall go well forward ; that which pleaseth thee shall not speed.

That which others say shall be heard ; what thou sayest shall be accounted nothing.

Others shall ask and shall receive ; thou shalt ask, but shalt not obtain.

5. Others shall be great in the praise of men, but about thee there shall be no word.

To others this or that shall be committed, but thou shalt be accounted of no use.

At this nature will sometimes be troubled, and it is a great thing if thou bear it with silence.

In these and many such like things, the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried, how far he can deny and break his will in all things.

There is scarcely anything wherein thou hast such need to die to thyself as in seeing and suffering those things that are contrary to thy will, especially when that is commanded to be done which seemeth to thee inconvenient or useless.

And because thou being under authority darest not resist the higher power, therefore it seemeth hard to thee to walk at another's beck and to feel that thou must give up all thine own will.

6. But consider, my son, the fruit of these labors, the end near at hand and the reward exceeding great, and

thou wilt not grudge to bear them ; rather thou wilt have the strongest comfort of thy patience.

For instead of that little of thy will which now thou so readily forsakest, thou shalt always have thy will in heaven.

Yea, there thou shalt find all that thou canst wish, all that thou shalt be able to desire.

There thou shalt have within thy reach all good, without fear of losing it.

There shall thy will be ever one with me ; it shall not covet any outward or selfish thing.

There none shall withstand thee, no man shall complain of thee, no man hinder thee, nothing come in thy way ; but all things thou canst desire shall be there together present, and shall refresh thy whole affection and fill it up to the brim.

There I will give thee glory for the reproach thou hast suffered here, the garment of praise for thy sorrows, for the lowest place a kingly throne forever.

There shall the fruit of obedience appear, the labor of repentance shall rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

7. At present then bend thyself humbly under all, and care not who said this or commanded that.

But take especial care that whether thy superior or thine inferior or thine equal require anything of thee or but insinuate a desire, thou take it all in good part and with a sincere will endeavor to fulfil it.

Let one seek this, another that ; let this man glory in this, the other in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times ; but do thou rejoice neither in this nor in that but in the contempt of thyself and in the good pleasure and honor of me alone.

This is what thou art to wish, that whether it be by life or by death, God may be always glorified in thee.

CHAPTER L

How a Desolate Man ought to put himself in the Hands of God

O LORD God, holy Father, be thou blessed both now and for evermore, because as thou wilt so is it done and what thou doest is good.

Let thy servant rejoice in thee, not in himself nor in anything else ; for thou alone art the true gladness, thou art my hope and my crown, thou art my joy and my honor, O Lord.

What hath thy servant but what he hath received from thee without any merit of his?

Thine are all things, both what thou hast given and what thou hast made.

I am poor and in labors from my youth, and sometimes my soul is sorrowful even unto tears; sometimes also it is disturbed within itself by reason of sufferings which hang over me.

2. I long after the joy of peace; I earnestly crave the peace of thy children who are fed by thee in the light of thy comfort.

If thou give peace, if thou pour into my heart holy joy, the soul of thy servant shall be full of melody and shall become devout in thy praise.

But if thou withdraw thyself, as many times thou dost, my soul will not be able to run in the way of thy commandments, but rather she will bow her knees, and smite her breast, because it is not now with her as it was in times past when thy lamp shined upon her head and under the shadow of thy wings she was protected from the temptations which assaulted her.

3. O righteous Father, and ever to be praised, the hour is come that thy servant is to be tried.

O beloved Father, meet and right it is that in this

hour thy servant should suffer something for thy sake.

O Father, evermore to be honored, the hour is come which from all eternity thou didst foreknow should come, that for a short time thy servant should outwardly be oppressed but inwardly should ever live with thee ;

That he should be for a little while despised and humbled and in the sight of men should fail and be wasted with sufferings and languors, that he might rise again with thee in the morning dawn of the new light and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, thou hast so appointed it, and so wilt have it ; and that is fulfilled which thyself hast commanded.

4. For this is a favor to thy friend, that for love of thee he may suffer and be afflicted in the world how often soever and by whom soever thou permittest such trials to befall him.

Without thy counsel and providence and without cause, nothing cometh to pass on earth.

It is good for me, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justification, and may cast away all pride of heart and presumption.

It is profitable for me that shame hath covered my face, that I may seek consolation of thee rather than of men.

I have learned also hereby to dread thine unsearchable judgments, who afflictest the just with the wicked though not without equity and justice.

5. I give thee thanks that thou hast not spared my sins, but hast worn me down with bitter stripes, inflicting sorrows and sending anxieties upon me within and without.

There is none else under heaven who can comfort me but thou only, O Lord my God, the heavenly physician of souls, who woundest and healest, who bringest down to hell and bringest back again.

Thy discipline is on me and thy rod shall instruct me.

6. Behold, O beloved Father, I am in thy hands ; I bow myself under the rod of thy correction.

Strike thou my back and my neck that I may bend my crookedness to thy will.

Make me a dutiful and humble disciple of thine, as thou hast been wont to be kind, that I may be ready at every beck of thy divine pleasure.

Unto thee I commend myself and all mine to be corrected ; it is better to be punished here than hereafter.

Thou knowest all and everything, and there is nothing in the conscience of man which can be hidden from thee.

Before any thing is done thou knowest that it will come to pass and hast no need that any should teach thee or admonish thee of those things which are being done on the earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my spiritual progress, and how greatly tribulation serves to scour off the rust of my sins.

Do with me according to thy good pleasure and disdain me not for my sinful life, known to none so thoroughly and clearly as to thee alone.

7. Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to praise that which pleaseth thee most, to esteem that highly which to thee is precious, to abhor that which in thy sight is filthy and unclean.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the eyes nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men, but with a true judgment to discern between things visible and spiritual, and above all to be ever searching after the good pleasure of thy will.

8. The minds of men are often deceived in their

judgments; the lovers of the world too are often deceived in loving only things visible.

Is a man ever the better for being esteemed great by man?

The deceitful in flattering the deceitful, the vain in extolling the vain, the blind in commending the blind, the weak in magnifying the weak, deceiveth him, and in truth doth rather put him to shame while he so vainly praiseth him.

For as saith the humble St. Francis,^o what each one is in thy sight, that is he, and no more.

CHAPTER LI

*That we must give ourselves to Humble Works when we are
Unequal to those that are Lofty*

MY son, thou art not able always to continue in the more fervent desire of virtue nor to persist in the highest degree of contemplation; but thou must needs sometimes, by reason of original corruption, descend to inferior things and bear the burden of this corruptible life, though against thy will and with weariness.

As long as thou carriest a mortal body thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest therefore in the flesh oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh ; for thou canst not employ thyself unceasingly in spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.°

2. Then it is expedient for thee to flee to humble and exterior works and to refresh thyself with good actions, to await with a firm confidence my coming and heavenly visitation, to bear patiently thy banishment and the dryness of thy mind, till I shall again visit thee and set thee free from all anxieties.

For I will cause thee to forget thy painful toils and to enjoy complete interior peace.

I will spread open before thee the pleasant fields of Holy Scripture, that with an enlarged heart thou mayest begin to run in the way of my commandments.

And thou shalt say, — The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.

CHAPTER LII

That a Man ought not to account himself Worthy of Consolation
but Deserving rather of Chastisement

O LORD, I am not worthy of thy consolation nor of any spiritual visitation, and therefore thou dealest justly with me when thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For though I could shed a sea of tears, still I should not be worthy of thy consolation.

I am not worthy of anything but to be scourged and punished, because I have grievously and often offended thee and in many things have greatly sinned.

Wherefore, all things duly considered, I am not worthy of the least of thy comforts.

But thou, O gracious and merciful God, who willest not that thy works should perish, to show the riches of thy goodness upon the vessels of mercy vouchsafest even beyond all his desert to comfort thy servant above the manner of men.

For thy consolations are not like the speech of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord, that thou shouldst bestow any heavenly comfort upon me?

I remember not that I have done any good, but that I have been always prone to sin and slow to amendment.

This is true, and I cannot deny it. If I should say otherwise, thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins but hell and everlasting fire?

I confess in very truth that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, nor is it fit that I should be remembered amongst thy devout servants.

And although I be unwilling to hear this, yet notwithstanding, for the truth's sake, I will lay open my sins against myself, that so the more readily I may be counted worthy to obtain thy mercy.

3. What shall I say, guilty that I am and full of all confusion?

My mouth can utter nothing but this word only, — I have sinned, O Lord! I have sinned; have mercy on me, pardon me.

Spare me a little, that I may bewail my griefs before I go into the land of darkness, a land misty with the shadow of death.

What dost thou so much require of a guilty and

miserable sinner as that he be contrite and that he humble himself for his offences?

From true contrition and humility of heart ariseth hope of forgiveness; the troubled conscience is reconciled; the favor of God, which was lost, is recovered; man is preserved from the wrath to come; and God and the penitent soul meet together in a holy kiss.

4. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice unto thee, O Lord, savoring much sweeter in thy presence than the perfume of frankincense.

This is also the pleasant ointment^o which thou wouldst to be poured upon thy sacred feet; for a contrite and humbled heart thou never hast despised.

Here is the place of refuge from the angry face of the enemy; here is amended and washed away whatever defilement and pollution hath been anywhere contracted.

CHAPTER LIII

That the Grace of God is not given to the Earthly Minded

MY son, my grace is precious; it suffereth not itself to be mingled with outward things nor with earthly consolations.

Thou oughtest therefore to cast away all hindrances to grace, if thou desire to receive the infusion thereof.

Choose to thyself a secret place, love to live with thyself alone, desire the conversation of no one; but rather pour out devout prayer unto God, that thou mayest keep thy soul contrite and thy conscience clean.

Esteem thou the whole world as nothing; prefer communion with God before all outward things.

For thou wilt not be able to attend upon me and at the same time to take delight in things transitory.

Thou oughtest to withdraw from thine acquaintances and friends, and not to depend on any temporal comfort.

So the blessed apostle Peter beseecheth that the faithful of Christ would keep themselves in this world as strangers and pilgrims.

2. Oh, how great a confidence shall he have at the hour of death whom no affection to any earthly thing detaineth in the world.

But to have a heart so freed from all things, the unspiritual mind doth not as yet comprehend; nor doth the carnal man know the liberty of him that is spiritual.

Notwithstanding, if he desire to be truly spiritual, he ought to renounce those who are far off as well as

those who are near him, and to beware of no man more than of himself.

If thou perfectly overcome thyself, thou shalt very easily bring all else under the yoke.

The perfect victory is to triumph over ourselves.

For he that keepeth himself subject in such sort that his affections be obedient to reason and his reason in all things obedient to me, he truly is conqueror of himself and lord of the world.

3. If thou desire to mount unto this height, thou must set out courageously and lay the axe to the root, that thou mayest pluck up and destroy both that hidden inordinate inclination to self and all love of private and earthly good.

On this sin of self-love almost all hangeth, whatsoever is thoroughly to be overcome; which evil being once vanquished and subdued, there will presently ensue great peace and tranquillity.

But because few labor perfectly to die unto themselves or altogether to go out of themselves, therefore in themselves they remain entangled, nor can be lifted up in spirit above themselves.

But for him that desireth to walk freely with me, it is necessary that he mortify all his corrupt and inordi-

nate affections and that he do not cling to any creature through self-love.

CHAPTER LIV

Of the Diverse Motions of Nature and Grace

MY son, mark diligently the stirrings of nature and grace; for in a very contrary yet subtile manner do they move, so that they can hardly be distinguished but by him that is spiritually and inwardly enlightened.

All men indeed desire that which is good and pretend some good in their words and deeds; and therefore, under the show of good, many are deceived.

Nature is crafty, and seduceth many, ensnareth and deceiveth them, and always proposeth herself for her end and object.

But grace walketh in simplicity, abstaineth from all show of evil, sheltereth not herself under deceits, doeth all things purely for God's sake, in whom also she finally resteth.

2. Nature is unwilling and loath to die, or to be kept down, or to be overcome, or to be in subjection, or readily to be subdued.

But grace studieth self-mortification, resisteth sensuality, seeketh to be in subjection, is desirous to be kept under and wisheth not to use her own liberty. She loveth to be kept under discipline, and desireth not to rule over any, but always to live and remain and be under God, and for God's sake is ready humbly to bow down unto all.

Nature striveth for her own advantage, and considereth what profit she may reap from another.

Grace considereth not what is profitable and convenient unto herself, but rather what may be for the good of many.

Nature willingly receiveth honor and reverence.

Grace faithfully attributeth all honor and glory unto God.

3. Nature feareth shame and contempt.

Grace rejoiceth to suffer reproach for the name of JESUS.

Nature loveth leisure and bodily ease.

Grace cannot be idle, but cheerfully embraceth labor.

Nature seeketh to have things that are curious and beautiful, and abhorreth those which are cheap and coarse.

Grace delighteth in what is plain and humble, de-

spiseth not rough things and refuseth not to be clothed in garments old and worn.

Nature respecteth temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gain, sorroweth for loss, is irritated by every little injurious word.

Grace looketh to things eternal, cleaveth not to things temporal, is not disturbed at losses nor soured with hard words, because she hath placed her treasure and joy in heaven, where nothing perisheth.

4. Nature is covetous, doth more willingly receive than give, and loveth to have things private and her own.

Grace is kind of heart and ready to share with others, shunneth private interest, is content with a little, judgeth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature inclineth a man to the creature, to his own flesh, to vanities and to wandering hither and thither.

Grace draweth him unto God and to every virtue, renounceth the creature, avoideth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth wanderings abroad, blusheth to be seen in public.

Nature is willing to have some outward solace whereby she may receive delight of the senses.

Grace seeketh consolation in God alone, and to have delight in the highest good above all visible things.

5. Nature turneth everything to her own gain and profit ; she cannot bear to do anything without reward, but for every kindness she hopeth to obtain either what is equal or what is better or at least praise or favor ; and is very earnest to have her works and gifts much valued.

Grace seeketh no temporal thing nor desireth any reward save God alone, and asketh not more of temporal necessities than what may serve her for the obtaining of things eternal.

6. Nature rejoiceth to have many friends and kinsfolk, she glorieth in nobility of place and birth ; she smileth on the powerful, fawneth upon the rich, applaudeth those who are like herself.

Grace loveth even her enemies and is not puffed up with multitude of friends, and thinketh not greatly of high birth unless it be joined with more exalted virtue.

Grace favoresh the poor rather than the rich, sympathizeth more with the innocent than with the powerful, rejoiceth with the true man, not with the deceitful.

She is ever exhorting good men to strive for the best gifts, and by all virtue to become like to the Son of God.

Nature quickly complaineth of want and of trouble.

Grace endureth need with firmness and constancy.

7. Nature referreth all things to herself, striveth and argueth for herself.

Grace bringeth back all to God from whence originally they proceed; she ascribeth no good to herself, nor doth she arrogantly presume; she contendeth not nor preferreth her own opinion before others, but in every matter of sense and understanding she submitteth herself unto the eternal wisdom and the divine judgment.

Nature is eager to know secrets and to hear news; she loveth to appear abroad and to make proof of many things by her own senses; she desireth to be acknowledged and to do things for which she may be praised and admired.

Grace careth not to hear news nor to understand curious matters, because all this taketh its rise from the old corruption, seeing that upon earth there is nothing new, nothing lasting.

Grace teacheth therefore to restrain the senses, to shun vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things that are worthy of admiration and praise, and from everything and in every knowledge to seek profitable fruit and the praise and honor of God.

She will not have herself nor that which pertaineth to her publicly praised, but desireth that God should be blessed in His gifts, because out of mere love He bestoweth all things.

8. This grace is a supernatural light and a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect and a pledge of everlasting salvation. It raiseth up a man from earthly things to love the things of heaven, and from being carnal maketh him a spiritual man.

The more therefore nature is depressed and subdued, so much the more is grace infused, and every day by new visitations the inward man is created anew according to the image of God.

CHAPTER LV

Of the Corruption of Nature and the Efficacy of Divine Grace

O LORD my God, who hast created me after thine own image and likeness, grant me this grace, which thou hast shown to be so great and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my corrupt nature which draweth me to sin and perdition.

For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things ; neither can I resist the passions thereof, unless thy most holy grace, infused into my heart, assist me.

2. There is need of thy grace, O Lord, and of a great measure thereof, that nature may be overcome which is ever prone to evil from its youth.

Because through Adam, the first man, nature being fallen and corrupted by sin, the penalty of this stain hath descended upon all mankind in such sort that *nature* itself, which by thee was created good and upright, now standeth for the sin and infirmity of corrupted nature ; because the inclination thereof left unto itself draweth to evil and to lower things.

For the small power which remaineth is, as it were, a spark lying hid in the ashes.

This is natural reason itself, encompassed about with great darkness, yet still retaining power to discern the difference between true and false, good and evil, although it be unable to fulfil all that it approveth, and enjoyeth no longer the full light of the truth nor soundness in its affections.

3. Hence it is, O my God, that according to the in-

ward man, I delight in thy law after knowing thy commandment to be good, just, and holy, reproving all evil and sin as things to be avoided.

But with the flesh I serve the law of sin, obeying my senses rather than my reason.

Hence it is, that to will what is good is present with me, but how to perform it I find not.

Hence it is that I often purpose many good things, but because grace is wanting to help my infirmity, upon a light resistance I start back and faint.

Hence it cometh to pass that I know the way of perfection, and see clearly enough what I ought to do ; but being pressed down by the weight of mine own corruption, I rise not to that which is more perfect.

4. O Lord, how entirely needful is thy grace for me to begin any good work, to go on with it, and to accomplish it.

For without that grace I can do nothing, but in thee I can do all things when thy grace doth strengthen me.

O grace, heavenly indeed, without which our most worthy actions are nothing, nor are any gifts of nature to be esteemed.

Neither arts nor riches, beauty nor strength, wit nor

eloquence, are of any value before thee without thy grace, O Lord.

For gifts of nature are common to good and bad, but the peculiar gift of the elect is grace or love ; and they that bear this honorable mark are accounted worthy of everlasting life.

So eminent is this grace that neither the gift of prophecy nor the working of miracles nor any speculation, how high soever, is of any value without it.

No, not even faith nor hope nor other virtues are unto thee acceptable without charity and grace.

5. O most blessed grace, that makest the poor in spirit rich in virtues and renderest him who is rich in many goods humble in heart !

Come thou down unto me, come and replenish me early with thy comfort, lest my soul faint for weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech thee, O Lord, that I may find grace in thy sight ; for thy grace is sufficient for me, though other things that nature desireth be not obtained.

Although I be tempted and vexed with many tribulations, yet I will fear no evil so long as thy grace is with me.

This alone and by itself is my strength ; this alone giveth advice and help.

This is stronger than all enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

6. Thy grace is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace in affliction, the driver away of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the mother of tears.

Without this, what am I but a withered branch and an unprofitable trunk, meet only to be cast away !

Let thy grace therefore, O Lord, always go before and follow me, and make me continually intent on good works, through thy Son JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

CHAPTER LVI

That we ought to deny ourselves and imitate Christ Crucified

MY son, the more thou canst go out of thyself, so much the more wilt thou be able to enter into me.

As to desire no outward thing produceth inward peace, so the forsaking of ourselves inwardly joineth us unto God.

I will have thee learn perfect resignation of thyself to my will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow thou me : I am the way, the truth, and the life. Without the way, there is no going ; without the truth, there is no knowing ; without the life, there is no living.

I am the way which thou oughtest to follow, the truth which thou oughtest to trust, the life which thou oughtest to hope for.

I AM the way inviolable, the truth infallible, the life that cannot end.

I AM the straightest way, the highest truth, the life true, blessed, and uncreated.

If thou abide in my way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on eternal life.

2. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

If thou wilt know the truth, believe me.

If thou wilt be perfect, sell all.°

If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself utterly.

If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this life present.

If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world.

If thou wilt reign with me, bear the cross with me.

For only the servants of the cross can find the way of blessedness and of true light.

3. O LORD JESUS, forasmuch as thy life was narrow and despised by the world, grant me to imitate thee, though the world despise.

For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the disciple above his Master.

Let thy servant be exercised in thy life, for therein consisteth my salvation and my true holiness.

Whatsoever I read or hear besides it, doth not give me full refreshment or delight.

4. MY son, inasmuch as thou knowest and hast read all these things, happy shalt thou be if thou do them.

He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him, and will make him sit together with me in my Father's kingdom.

O LORD JESUS, as thou hast said and promised, so let it come to pass, and grant that I may not be wholly undeserving of this favor.

I have received the cross from thy hand ; I have

borne it, and will bear it unto death, even as thou hast laid it upon me.

Verily, the life of a Christian is a cross, yet is it also a guide to paradise.

I have begun, I may not go back, neither is it fitting to leave that which I have undertaken.

5. Courage, then, brethren, let us go forward together ! JESUS will be with us.

For the sake of JESUS we have undertaken this cross ; for the sake of Jesus let us persevere in the cross.

He will be our helper, who is also our guide and fore-runner.

Behold, our King entereth in before us, and He will fight for us.

Let us follow manfully, let no man fear any terrors ; let us be prepared to die valiantly in battle, and not tarnish our honor by flying from the cross.

CHAPTER LVII

*That a Man should not be too much dejected, even when he
falleth into Some Defects*

MY son, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to me than much comfort and devotion in prosperity.

Why art thou so grieved for every little matter spoken against thee?

Although it had been much more, thou oughtest not to have been moved.

But now let it pass; it is not the first that hath happened, nor is it anything new; neither shall it be the last, if thou live long.

Thou art courageous enough so long as nothing adverse befalleth thee.

Thou canst give good counsel also, and canst strengthen others with thy words; but when any tribulation suddenly cometh to thy door thou failest in counsel and in strength.

Observe then thy great frailty, of which thou too often hast experience in small matters.

It is notwithstanding intended for thy good when these and such like trials happen to thee.

2. Put it out of thy heart as well as thou canst ; and if it touch thee, yet let it not cast thee down nor long perplex thee.

At least bear it patiently if thou canst not bear it joyfully.

Although thou be unwilling to hear it and conceive indignation thereat, yet restrain thyself and suffer no ill-advised word to pass out of thy mouth whereby Christ's little ones may be offended.

The storm which is now raised shall quickly be appeased, and inward grief shall be sweetened by the return of grace.

I yet live, saith the Lord, and am ready to help thee and to give thee greater comfort than before, if thou put thy trust in me and call'devoutly upon me.

3. Be more patient of soul and gird thyself to greater endurance.

All is not lost, although thou feel thyself very often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Thou art man, and not God ; thou art flesh, not an angel.

How canst thou continue always in the same state of virtue, when the ángels in heaven fell, as also the first man in paradise ?

I am He who lifteth up the mourners in safety and those that know their own weakness I advance to mine own divine glory.

4. O LORD, blessed be thy word, more sweet unto my mouth than honey and the honeycomb.

What should I do in so great tribulations and anxieties, unless thou didst comfort me with thy holy words?

What matter is it how much or what I suffer, so I may at length attain to the haven of salvation?

Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world.

Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right way to thy kingdom. Amen.

CHAPTER LVIII

*That High Matters and God's Secret Judgments are not to be
Enquired Into*

MY son, beware thou dispute not of high matters nor of the secret judgments of God, why this man is so left and that man taken into such great favor, why also one man is so much afflicted and another so greatly advanced.

These things are beyond the reach of man, neither is it in the power of any reason or disputation to search out the judgments of God.

When therefore the enemy suggesteth these things unto thee or some curious people raise the question, let thy answer be that of the prophet, — Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.

And again, — The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.

My judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed ; for they are such as cannot be comprehended by the understanding of man.

2. In like manner I advise thee not to inquire, nor dispute concerning the merits of the saints, which of them is holier than the other or which the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

These things oftentimes breed strife and unprofitable contentions ; they also nourish pride and vainglory, from whence spring envy and dissensions, whilst one will proudly prefer this saint, and another that.

To desire to know and search out such things is fruitless and rather displeaseth the saints. I am not the God of dissension, but of peace ; which peace consisteth rather in true humility than in self-exaltation.

3. Some are carried with zeal of affection towards these saints or those ; but this is rather human love than divine.

I am He who made all the saints, I gave them grace, I brought them glory.

I know what every one hath deserved ; I led them with the blessings of my sweetness.

I foreknew my beloved ones before the beginning of the world.

I chose them out of the world ; they chose not me^o first.

I called them by grace, I drew them by mercy, I led them safely through sundry temptations.

I poured into them glorious consolations, I gave them perseverance, I crowned their patience.

4. I acknowledge both the first and the last ; I embrace all with love inestimable.

I am to be praised in all my saints ; I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honored in all whom I have thus gloriously exalted and predestined without any merits of their own.

He therefore that despiseth one of the least of mine, honoreth not the greatest ; for I made both the small and the great.

And he that dispraiseth any of my saints dispraiseth me also, and all the rest in the kingdom of heaven.

These all are one through the bond of love; their thought is the same, their will is the same, and they all love one another.

5. But still, which is a far higher thing, they love me more than themselves or any merits of their own.

For being ravished above self and self-love, they are wholly absorbed in the love of me, in whom also they rest with full fruition.

Nothing can turn them back, nothing can press them down; for being full of the eternal Truth, they burn with the fire of unquenchable charity.

Let therefore carnal and natural men, who can love nothing but their own selfish joys, forbear to dispute of the state of God's saints. Such men add and take away according to their own fancies, not as it pleaseth the eternal Truth.

6. Many are ignorant, especially those who, but little enlightened, can seldom love any one with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much drawn by a natural affection and human friendship to this man or to that; and according to the experience they have of themselves in

their earthly affections, so do they frame imaginations of things heavenly.

But there is an incomparable distance between the things which the imperfect imagine and the things which they that are enlightened are enabled to behold through revelation from above.

7. Beware therefore, my son, that thou handle not with vain curiosity things which exceed thy knowledge ; but rather let this be thy great business and endeavor, to attain if it be but the meanest place in the kingdom of God.

Even if any man should know who exceeds another in sanctity or who is accounted the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, what would this wisdom profit him unless he should humble himself the more in my sight, and then should rise up to give the greater praise to my name in proportion to this his knowledge ?

Far more acceptable to God is he that thinketh of the greatness of his own sins and the smallness of his virtues and how far he is from the perfection of the saints, than he who disputeth of their greatness or littleness.

It is better to entreat the saints with devout prayers and tears, and with humility of mind to implore their

glorious suffrages, than with idle inquiry to search narrowly into their secret affairs.

8. They are well, yea right well, contented, if men would but content themselves, and refrain from vain discourses.

They glory not in their own merits, inasmuch as they ascribe no goodness to themselves, but attribute all to me who of mine infinite love have given them all things.

They are filled with so great love of God and with such an overflowing joy, that there is no glory nor happiness that is or that can be wanting unto them.

All the saints, the higher they are in glory, are the more humble in themselves and the nearer and dearer unto me.

And therefore it is written,^o that they did cast their crowns before God, and fell down on their faces before the Lamb and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever.

9. Many inquire who is the greatest in the kingdom of God who know not whether they shall ever be numbered among the least.

It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven, where all are great; for they all shall be called, and shall be, the sons of God.

The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die.

For when the disciples asked who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they received this answer :

Unless ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven ; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

10. Woe be unto them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with little children, because the low gate of the kingdom of heaven will not suffer them to enter in.

Woe also to the rich, who have here their consolation ; for whilst the poor enter into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without.

Rejoice ye humble, and ye poor be filled with joy, for yours is the kingdom of God, if indeed ye walk according to the truth.

CHAPTER LIX

That All our Hope and Confidence are to be fixed in God Alone

LORD, what is the confidence which I have in this life, or what is the greatest comfort I can derive from anything under heaven?

Is it not thou, O Lord my God, whose mercies are without number?

Where hath it ever been well with me without thee? Or when could it be ill with me when thou wert present?

I had rather be poor for thy sake than rich without thee.

I rather choose to be a pilgrim on earth with thee than without thee to possess heaven. Where thou art, there is heaven; and where thou art not, there is death and hell.

Thou art all my desire, and therefore I must needs sigh and call and earnestly pray unto thee.

For I have no one fully to trust to, no one that can seasonably help me in my necessities, but only thee, my God.

Thou art my hope, my confidence; thou art my comforter in all things most faithful unto me.

2. All men seek their own gain ; thou aimest only at my salvation and my profit, and turnest all things to my good.

Although thou exposest me to divers temptations and adversities, yet thou orderest all this to mine advantage, who art wont to try thy beloved ones in a thousand ways.

In which trial of me thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised than if thou didst fill me full of heavenly consolations.

3. In thee, therefore, O Lord God, I place my whole hope and refuge ; on thee I rest in my tribulation and anguish ; for I find all to be weak and inconstant, whatsoever I behold save in thee.

For many friends cannot profit nor strong helpers assist nor prudent counsellors give a profitable answer nor the books of the learned afford comfort, nor any precious substance deliver nor any place however retired and lovely give shelter, unless thou thyself dost assist, help, strengthen, console, instruct, and guard us.

4. For all things that seem to belong to the attainment of peace and felicity without thee are nothing, and in truth bring no felicity at all.

Thou therefore art the end of all that is good, the

height of life, the depth of all that can be spoken ; and to hope in thee above all things is the strongest comfort of thy servants.

To thee, therefore, do I lift up mine eyes ; in thee, my God, the Father of mercies, do I put my trust.

Bless and sanctify my soul with thy heavenly blessings, that it may become thy holy habitation, and the seat of thine eternal glory ; and let nothing be found in this temple of thy dignity which shall offend the eyes of thy majesty.

According to the greatness of thy goodness and the multitude of thy mercies look upon me and hear the prayer of thy poor servant, who is exiled far from thee in the land of the shadow of death.

Protect and keep the soul of thy poor servant amidst the many dangers of this corruptible life ; and, by thy grace accompanying, direct me along the way of peace to the land of everlasting light. *Amen.*

NOTES

THE FIRST BOOK. — I. 1. In this first paragraph the author strikes the keynote of the book. He indicates the appropriateness of the title, and states the scope and method of his treatise.

2. *manna*. The miraculous food which, according to the Holy Scriptures (Exodus xvi), fell from heaven that the Hebrews might get sustenance in the desert.

3. *contempt of the world*. This expression, so frequently met with in ascetic writings, means a disregard of what is evil or frivolous in life. *The world* here means, not the world of nature, but the works and the spirit of men who live idle or degraded lives.

II. 1. *what availeth knowledge?* À Kempis does not condemn learning in itself, but he insists repeatedly that knowledge is but a means to an end, and that purity of life and union with God should be the primary, though not the sole, endeavor of the devout Christian.

3. *more skilful in the Scripture*. More deeply versed in Biblical lore and better fitted to expound the sacred text.

III. 2. *genera and species*. Singular, *genus* and *species*. The words indicate two of the classifications insisted on in the Scholastic Philosophy. Genus in its logical bearing is a universal notion that can be predicated of many species;

species is a universal notion that can be predicated of many individuals. The passage alludes to the problem of universal ideas which engaged the attention of the Schoolmen during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and which in à Kempis's time had dwindled down to subtle and ultra-recondite disputes. This entire chapter shows the author's disregard for mere speculative knowledge and his preference for what concerns the practical side of human life.

4. *A humble knowledge of thyself.* Here is an echo of the old Socratic dictum, "Know thyself."

learning is not to be blamed. In this paragraph we have an adequate expression of the attitude of à Kempis toward learning

5. *doctors and masters.* Distinguished scholars. The universities conferred degrees of bachelor, master, licentiate, and doctor.

V. *Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.* It is interesting to note that in this chapter, while having the Bible only in view, à Kempis lays down several important rules to be followed in literary study. Pick out the recommendations applicable to the reading of any great book. Compare this chapter with Bacon's celebrated essay, "Of Studies."

VI. 2. *appetite.* Natural feelings that incline toward what is evil.

VIII. *That too much Familiarity is to be Shunned.* Compare with the oft-quoted advice of Polonius to Laertes (Hamlet, I, iii, 61-65). Observe that the monk and the councillor, looking at life from divergent points of view, arrive at substantially the same practical conclusion.

X. 2. *speaking those things that may edify.* Thomas à Kempis practised what he preached. His biographers tell us that he always withdrew from company when the conversation turned upon frivolous or disedifying topics.

XI. 5. *conversion.* The time at which we entered the religious state.

profession. Making perpetual vows according to the rules of a religious order or congregation.

first fervor. The enthusiasm for the religious life and the pursuit of virtue characteristic of persons but recently admitted into a religious order.

XIII. 3. *we are fallen from the state of original happiness.* A reference to the doctrine of original sin, which "is a mystery," says Balme, "but it explains the whole world."

5. *Resist beginnings, etc.* Ovid (*Remedia Amoris*, 91).

XV. 1. *He doeth much that loveth much.* What lines in Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" express this universal truth in almost identical form.

XVI. 4. *occasions . . . show what he is.* In reading Shakespeare's First Part of "King Henry Fourth," note how the battle of Shrewsbury is the occasion which shows what manner of men Prince Hal, Hotspur, John of Lancaster, and Falstaff really are.

XVII. 1. *esteemed as a fool in this world.* Worldlings, not being in a position to understand the viewpoint of the monk, conclude that he is the victim of fanaticism or hypocrisy, or else is lacking in fundamental intelligence and common sense.

2. *tonsure.* The custom of shaving the crown of the head practised by almost all religious orders in the time of à Kempis.

XIX. 2. *man proposeth, but God disposeth.* This proverb, familiar throughout the centuries, finds its first expression in the Old Testament, "The heart of man disposeth his way, but the Lord must direct his steps" (Proverbs xvi, 9).

4. *bodily exercises.* Fasting, vigils, and other forms of exterior mortification.

XX. 2. *a philosopher.* Seneca (circa 4 B.C.-65 A.D.). The reference is to the Seventh Epistle. In like manner, an eminent scholar put this placard above the door of his study: "Who enters here does me honor; who keeps out gives me pleasure."

5. *Commune with your own heart,* etc. A paraphrase of a passage in the Old Testament (Psalms iv, 5).

XXI. 3. *religious.* A noun, used in the sense of a person who has made vows in accordance with the rules of an order or congregation approved by the Church.

6. *the Prophet.* King David, to whom the authorship of the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament is generally attributed. David is styled the Prophet because the Psalms contain prophecies concerning the Messiah.

XXII. 5. *have lost our innocence.* That is, baptismal innocence. According to the teaching of the Church, the sacrament of baptism removes from the soul the stains of all sin, both original and actual. When sins are committed after the reception of the sacrament, the baptismal innocence is lost.

XXIII. 5. *the help of others after thy death.* The author of "The Imitation" was, of course, a believer in the efficacy of prayers for the dead. The meaning of the passage is, that it is wiser and better for the follower of Christ to secure merit

for himself by his own prayers and good works while he is alive, rather than to depend exclusively on the suffrages of his fellow-Christians who may pray for him after his death.

XXV. 1. *why thou hast left the world.* St. Bernard, the Abbot of Clairvaux, was in the habit of reminding himself of his obligations as a monk by asking himself this question, "Bernard, why hast thou entered religion?"

2. *his anxious wavering ceased.* It is generally supposed that here à Kempis relates one of his own experiences.

7. *the Carthusians and the Cistercians.* Two religious orders noted for the severity of their rules. The Carthusians were founded by St. Bruno in 1084 under the patronage of St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble. Their first foundation was made in a place called the Chartreuse in the Alps of Dauphine. The Cistercians, commonly known as the Trappists from the monastery of La Trappe, were founded by St. Robert at Citeaux in France at the end of the eleventh century. See the Catholic Encyclopedia under the articles *Bruno*, *Carthusians*, and *Cistercians*.

THE SECOND BOOK.—I. 4. *stigmas.* The marks of the nails in the hands and feet of Christ and the spear wound in His side.

III. 1. *A passionate man . . . easily believeth the worst.* What facts in history can you recall to verify this statement? How does Shakespeare show its truth in "Othello"?

IX. 2. *The holy martyr Lawrence.* A deacon in the Roman Church in the third century. When the Pope, St. Sixtus, was being conducted to execution, Lawrence called

after him, "Whither goest thou without thy deacon?" The Pope replied that Lawrence was destined soon to follow — a prophecy verified three days later.

5. *I shall never be moved.* This and the following quotations are from the Psalms.

THE THIRD BOOK.—This book appears as the Fourth Book in most editions of "The Imitation." The order of books observed in this edition follows the order given in the à Kempis autograph manuscript of 1441. The Third Book is the keystone of the treatise, dealing as it does with the Holy Eucharist, which might be called the apex of the spiritual life — the point whither everything is directed and whence everything flows. The Third Book is in the form of a colloquy between Christ and the Devout Soul.

I. 3. *Noe.* The familiar story of the ark and the deluge may be found in Genesis vi.

4. *Moses.* See Exodus xxv.

Solomon. The history of the building and dedication of the temple in Jerusalem is given in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of the Third Book of Kings.

7. *king David danced.* In our day the idea of the dance forming part of a religious ceremonial may appear incongruous, but the fact remains that among the ancient peoples, notably the Greeks, the dance was a recognized religious rite. The Greek drama was evolved from the religious dance incidental to the celebration of the feast of the wine god, Dionysus. The account of David's dancing before the ark may be found in the sixth chapter of the Second Book of Kings.

8. *to visit the relics of the saints.* Thomas à Kempis wrote at a time when pilgrimages to the shrines of saints were frequent.

III. *That it is Profitable to Communicate often.* This chapter is in accord with the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. The early Christians met daily for "the breaking of bread"; the Council of Trent, held in the sixteenth century, voiced the wish that the faithful approach the Holy Table every time they assist at Mass, and Pope Pius X has taken special measures to encourage the practice of frequent communion.

1. *Zaccheus.* See the Gospel according to St. Luke, xix, 1-10.

IV. 4. *cherubim and seraphim.* Hebrew words borrowed from the Arabic; singular, *cherub* and *seraph*. The highest of the nine choirs of angels.

V. This chapter, applicable chiefly to priests, was probably written about the year 1413, when the author was raised to the priesthood.

VII. 2. *saying thy office.* The office, or holy hours, is a collection of prayers, varying in certain details for each season of the ecclesiastical year, which priests are obliged to read every day. The office is taken chiefly from the Bible. It also contains brief lives of the saints.

XII. 1. *a large upper room.* The Last Supper was eaten by Christ and His apostles in a large upper room. See the Gospel according to St. Luke xxii, 11-12; and the Gospel according to St. Mark xiv, 14-15.

3. *the grace of devotion.* A spontaneous feeling of love toward Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and of zeal for His honor and glory.

XVII. 2. *according to thy word.* The Gospel narrative of the Annunciation is given in the first chapter of St. Luke.

3. *the voice of the bridegroom.* See St. John iii, 29.

THE FOURTH BOOK.—II. 1. *let not the Lord speak to us lest we die.* The author here dwells upon a fundamental distinction between the old law, given through Moses to the Jews, and the new law, expounded by Christ and His Church. The former was a law of fear; the latter is the law of love.

the prophet Samuel. The last of the judges who ruled over Israel before the adoption of royalty. See the First Book of Kings iii, 9.

III. Most of the chapters of the Fourth Book are in the form of a dialogue between Christ and the Devout Soul.

2. *Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.* See the twenty-third chapter of Isaías. The prophet tells us that Sidon, a prosperous and wicked city, is reproached by the sea. The application which à Kempis makes of the idea is obvious.

4. *in the day of visitation.* In times of trial and anguish. Experience of life constantly reveals to us the inner meaning of the great books of the world. Literature interprets life, and, conversely, life interprets literature.

XI. 2. *beget scandal in others.* Give others the impression that you are doing wrong.

XII. 2. *worldlings.* Persons who devote themselves to the cares and enjoyments of the world without heeding the spiritual life and the things that pertain to eternal salvation.

XX. 3. *the old man.* Ascetic writers so style the desires and tendencies of human nature not enlightened and strengthened by spiritual insight. Similarly, "the new man" is hu-

man nature purified and confirmed by divine grace. St. Paul admonishes the Ephesians "to put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."

XXXI. 1. *Who will give me*, etc. See the Psalms liv, 7. *the eye that is single*. The man who regards things in the light of faith. "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome" (St. Matthew vi, 22).

4. *the great deluge*. Genesis vi, vii, viii.

XXXII. 2. *a father over thee*. The superior of the religious community, whom the monk is to regard as holding the place of God.

XXXIII. 2. *that they might see Lazarus*. Martha and Mary were the sisters of Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead. Many of the Jews came to these women's house in Bethania, ostensibly through fervor of spirit to hearken to Jesus, but in reality through vulgar curiosity to behold the man whom Jesus had restored to life. See the Gospel according to St. John xii, 9.

XXXVIII. 2. *the tabernacle*. The portable tent in which the ark of the covenant was kept prior to the building of the temple by Solomon. See Exodus xxxiii.

2. *deceived by the Gabaonites*. Josue was persuaded into forming an alliance with the Gabaonites who, by a clever ruse, led him to believe that their country lay far beyond the land of Chanaan — the country the Israelites had been commanded by God to conquer. Josue and the elders of the people

were deceived because, in the words of Holy Scripture, they "consulted not the mouth of the Lord." See the Book of Josue ix.

XLIII. 4. *The voice of books . . . teacheth not all alike.* Many men may read the same book, but each will receive from it a varying degree of benefit and enlightenment, in accordance with his natural ability, mental bias, and experience of men and things. Hence the saying, "One man's food is another man's poison." St. Paul recognized this fact in its application to the spoken, as distinguished from the written word, in his dealings with some of his converts to whom he spoke "as unto little ones in Christ." "I gave you milk to drink," he tells them (1 Corinthians iii, 2), "not meat; for you were not able as yet."

XLV. 3. *My mind is firmly settled and grounded in Christ.* The illusion is to St. Agatha, a native of Sicily, who suffered martyrdom at Catana under the Emperor Decius (A.D. 25). In reply to an infamous person who sought to lead her into sin, she said: "My mind is firmly settled and grounded in Christ. Your words are winds, your promises are rains, your terrors are floods. With what violence soever they may beat against my house, it can never fall, for it is founded upon a solid rock."

L. 8. *Saint Francis*, of Assisi (1182-1226), the founder of the order of Friars Minor, commonly known to-day as Franciscans. St. Francis was distinguished for his humility and charity and for his consistent practice of evangelical poverty.

LI. 1. *thou canst not employ thyself unceasingly in spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.* It was the recognition of

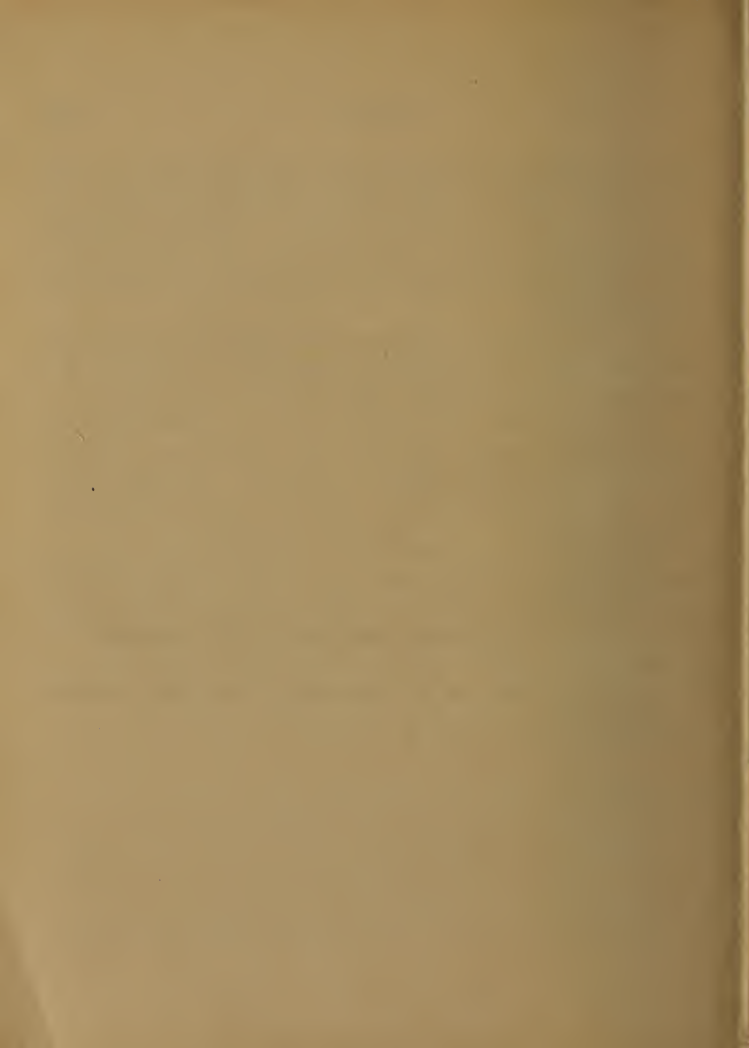
this truth that made St. Benedict, St. Francis, and the other founders of religious orders insist upon manual labor as an essential point of rule for their disciples. The Canons Regular of St. Augustine, among whom the author of "The Imitation" was enrolled, devoted a portion of their time "to humble and exterior works."

LII. 4. *the pleasant ointment*. An allusion to the precious spikenard with which St. Mary Magdalen anointed the feet of Christ. See the Gospel according to St. John xii. 3.

LVI. 2. *sell all*. The advice given by Christ, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me" (St. Matthew xix, 21). The vow of poverty made by religious is based on this maxim of the Gospel.

LVIII. 3. *they chose not me*. It was through the grace of God that the saints attained their growth in holiness. God gave them the gift of grace, with which they corresponded. "You have not chosen me," said Christ to His apostles, "but I have chosen you."

8. *it is written*. In the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelations, iv.



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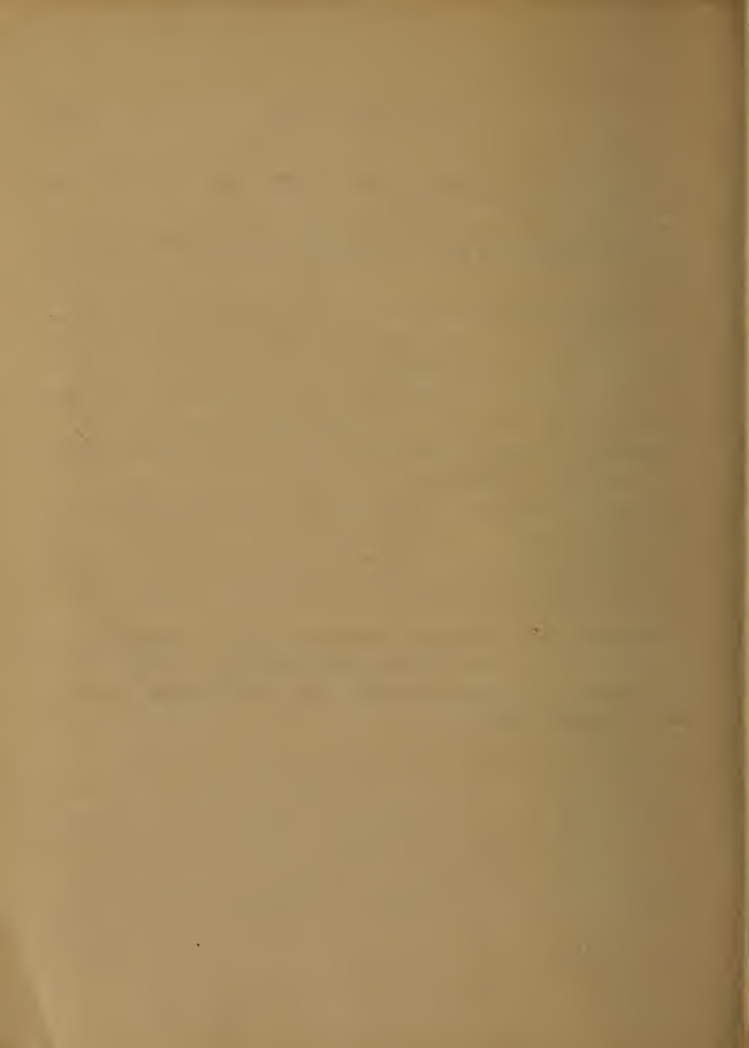
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